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THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF  
MAHATMA GANDHI & SARVODAYA

# THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI AND SARVODAYA

By

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## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

In this edition the text has been subjected to a rigorous scrutiny. Some matter has been shifted from footnotes to the text and vice versa, and some evaluative judgments have been re-assessed. The chapters and sections on Gandhism and comparative political philosophy have been put together. Further attempts have been made to strengthen the character of the book as an objective and synthetic treatise on Gandhian political philosophy.

Some new matter has been incorporated. A section entitled "The Vedas, the Upanishads and Gandhi" has been added. The social activities and philosophy of Gandhi have been discussed in a historical perspective. A full study of Mahatma Gandhi and Independent India has been added in the Appendix. The fourth appendix entitled "Reminiscences of Mahatma Gandhi" prepared on the occasion of the Gandhi centenary at the instance of editors of journals and appended in this edition adds a note of personal subjectivism to the treatise. The Bibliography has been revised and the items have been numbered.

I am grateful to all the reviewers and readers of the book and thankful to the enterprising publishers who have been engaged in the publicity of the work.

*Patna*

April 13, 1972

—V. P. VARMA

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The demand for a second edition of this book gives me great intellectual satisfaction. It is an indication that the systematic study of Gandhian political thought is engaging the attention of teachers, students and citizens. The first edition was published in September 1959. Since then, I have obtained further insight in political philosophy during the course of teaching and seminars. An attempt has been made to revise the text of the first edition very thoroughly in the light of these insights. Thus, the sections dealing with comparative political philosophy, like Gandhi and Plato, Gandhi and Tolstoy, Gandhi and Thoreau, and Gandhi and Green have been considerably expanded. The publication of the eleven volumes of *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* and the eight volumes in the series of Gandhi's letters has made available a rich mine of information for the biographer. They reveal the growth of the synthesis of spiritual prophecy and political realism in Gandhi's personality. *The Collected Works* which contain several series of summaries by Gandhi of influential Western books, like Plato's *Apology*, Salter's *Ethical Religion* and Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*, indicate that Gandhi was, even in his earlier days, interested in theoretical studies only to the extent that they supported a moral approach to life and politics. The published volumes of *The Collected Works* also make possible the adoption of an evolutionary approach towards Gandhian thought. Additional material has also been added in this edition. For the corroboration of statements made in the text, further footnotes have been incorporated. Three previously published papers of mine, "Gandhi and Auguste Comte", "Gandhi and Marx" and "Recent Literature in Gandhiology" have been added as appendices. Even these appendices appear here in a revised form. Thus, this edition is in several ways a new book. It is hoped that in the present form this book places Gandhian political theory in the framework of comparative political thought. I am happy to find that in following the extensively comparative method with regard to Gandhian thought, I am in the happy company of John H. Holmes, Fullop-Miller, L. Fischer and even Ernest Barker who makes a comparison between *Gandhism and Plato's Republic*.

Gandhi's strongest point is that he attempted to live according to his teachings. The sincere effort for the practical realization of his ideas in his own life, in the lives of the inmates of his Ashrama and in the social, economic and political life of India, imparts to Gandhian teachings a great solidity. Hence although I miss in Gandhism that philosophical depth and subtlety of academic analysis which I find in Plato, Samkara and Kant, I am serious about the impact of his teachings in India and the world as a whole. Even as an M. A. (previous) student, I had noted in my Diary in 1943 my desire to establish a "Gandhi Siddhanta Pracharak Mandal" (An Association for the Propagation of Gandhi's Theories). I am grateful to God that I got the time and the opportunity to make some study of Gandhian literature and to publish the results of my labour. But I am convinced that intellectual discussion is only the first stage. Real benefit to individuals and groups can only come through the practice of those teachings. Some people say that Mahatma Gandhi was the instrument of the World-Spirit for effectuating the independence of India and now that independence has been achieved his historic role has come to an end and that henceforward India should plan her economic, social and diplomatic life on western patterns. In this book, I have voiced grave doubts against such a view. I favour a synthesis rather than a wholesale imitation.

Those of us who have experienced the agonies of political dependence do get emotional when talking of Gandhi's personality as that of a great liberator. But this statement is only at the level of his personality. In the discussion of his philosophy I have tried to be objective, and critical and comparative evaluations of his contributions have been sought to be made. Hence I will ask reviewers and journalists not to be content with reading only the first chapter and framing judgments on that basis. It is not surprising that a reviewer of this book in *The American Political Science Review* felt mortified at my emotional and polemical approach to Gandhism. I want to assure this reviewer that my personal veneration for the Mahatma does not preclude a systematic analysis and critical evaluation of his thought. One reviewer of the first edition of the book who claims to have received guidance in Gandhian research from Morris-Jones raised a few points which showed that he had not read it and was actuated more by jealousy than by a dispassionate spirit of intellectual discussion. The fact that this reviewer has not read

the book is evident when he accuses me of not distinguishing between the ideal and the actual in Gandhian thought. I will ask the interested reader to read the sub-section "Distinction between Ideal Society and Swaraj" in my book. Mahatma Gandhi was certainly an advocate of the absolutism of the great "Vows" (or *Vratas*) but he did have the realistic vision to recognize that failing men with limited capacities could not follow those vows in their entirety. Hence he made certain concessions to the irrevocable norms of non-violence. He might not have used the word "reservations" or "concessions" but his statements and precepts and actions amounted to such an acceptance. He said that India will need soldiers even after independence. In the *Harijan*, September 1, 1940, Gandhi wrote : "I have conceded that even in a non-violent state a police force may be necessary. This I admit is a sign of my imperfect Ahimsa. I would have liked the reviewer to be more patient and more studious.

*Patna-4*

September 15, 1965.

—V. P. VARMA

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

This book entitled *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvodaya* incorporates the results of my studies, researches and reflections extending over a number of years. It was in the year 1939 that I first read Gandhi's *Autobiography* in a Hindi edition. In 1940, I did some reading in the comparative analysis and evaluation of Gandhism and socialism. The 1942 "Quit India Movement" intensified my interest in the field of Gandhiology. In that year I studied the writings of Gandhi in the *Young India* and the *Harijan*. From May 1947 to August 1950, I was in U. S. A. and in Europe, and I got several occasions to address meetings, seminars and symposia on Gandhian philosophy and political thought. I was present at the meeting organized in February 1948 by the United Nations Security Council in the New York City Hall to pay homage to the memory of Mahatma Gandhi. After my return from the United States, I got a number of opportunities of addressing meetings organized for the discussion of Gandhism and Sarvodaya. Since 1957 the Sociology Department of the Patna University organized a plan for the preparation of theses by M.A. students on Indian political and social writers and leaders under my guidance. All these different types of intellectual activities have deepened my interest in the critical, analytical and comparative study of Gandhian political and social thought.

I have also been interested in the movement of Mahatma Gandhi. I had the occasion of having the "Darshana" of Gandhiji in 1934 at Madhubani, in 1939 at the Brindaban meeting of the Gandhi Sewa Sangha in Champaran, in 1940 at the Sadaquat Ashrama, Patna, and for several days in 1947, I attended his prayer meetings at the Bankipore Maidan subsequently named Gandhi Maidan. Thus I have been an occasional sharer in the dramatic and momentous energy released by Gandhi's personality.

I owe my initial attraction for the personality of Mahatma Gandhi to my late revered father Sri Ram Charitra Prasad. Although my father was in government service, he had a tremendous admiration for the Mahatma and was a habitual wearer of Khaddar.

I put a comprehensive meaning on the term "political philosophy". It includes a study of the philosophical, ethical, sociological and economic foundations and implications of political propositions. I have thus included, in this book, not only a study of the explicitly formulated political propositions, concepts, categories and entities but have also elaborately discussed the foundations of political thought. Gandhism is not an explicitly and narrowly analytical and positive body of political knowledge. Gandhi had a comprehensive approach to political life. He wanted the subordination of political and social considerations to moral considerations. Hence only a comprehensive theoretical enquiry can do justice to Gandhism.

After the tragic passing away of Mahatma Gandhi his thought is being developed, extended and re-interpreted by the exponents of Sarvodaya School of thought. I have included in this book, hence, two chapters also on the thought of Sarvodaya.

I am thankful to the energetic publishers of this book, Messrs Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, but for whose zeal and enterprise this book would not have been brought out in this form.

*Patna-6*

March 31, 1959.

—V. P. VARMA

## C O N T E N T S

<i>Chapter</i>		<i>Page</i>
<b>PART ONE</b>		
<b>PHILOSOPHICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF GANDHIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT</b>		
1.	The Personality and Leadership of Mahatma Gandhi	... 3
2.	Gandhi's Role in World History and Politics	... 21
3.	Philosophical Foundations of Gandhi's Political Thought	... 30
4.	Psychology and Humanism in Gandhian Thought	... 48
5.	Religion and Politics in Gandhian Thought	... 59
6.	Ethics and Politics in Gandhian Thought	... 80
7.	Gandhi's Theory of Civilization and Culture	... 89
8.	The Social Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi	... 107
9.	The Economic Foundations of Gandhi's Political Thought	... 122
<b>PART TWO</b>		
<b>THE POLITICAL THEORY OF MAHATMA GANDHI</b>		
10.	The Social and Political Implications of Non-Violence	... 151
11.	Non-violence and Democracy	... 179
12.	The Theory and Practice of Satyagraha	... 188
13.	The Political Theory of Mahatma Gandhi	... 218
14.	Mahatma Gandhi's Contributions to Political Philosophy	... 268
<b>PART THREE</b>		
<b>GANDHISM AND COMPARATIVE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY</b>		
15.	Gandhi and Plato	... 281
16.	Gandhi and Auguste Comte	... 287
17.	Gandhi and Marx	... 298
18.	Gandhi and T. H. Green	... 321
19.	Gandhi and Lenin	... 324

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
<b>PART FOUR</b>	
<b>THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SARVODAYA</b>	
20. The Philosophical and Sociological Foundations of Sarvodaya	... 329
21. The Political Philosophy of Sarvodaya	... 348
<b>PART FIVE</b>	
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
<i>Appx. One : Gandhism and the Post-1948 World</i>	... 371
<i>Appx. Two : Recent Literature in Gandhiology</i>	... 387
<i>Appx. Three : Rural Violence and its Remedies</i>	... 396
<i>Appx. Four : Reminiscences of Mahatma Gandhi</i>	... 406
<b>SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	... 410
<b>INDEX</b>	... 417

Part ONE

**PHILOSOPHICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL AND  
ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF  
GANDHIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**

# 1

## THE PERSONALITY AND LEADERSHIP OF MAHATMA GANDHI

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### 1. Mahatma Gandhi as a Social and Political Philosopher

Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) was not a systematic philosopher of the academic and speculative type in the field of metaphysics and political science. But certainly he has stressed some fundamental ideas for the regeneration of man and the reconstruction of society and politics and in this sense he can be regarded as a moral, social and political thinker. He was a prophet, teacher and leader but not a rational dialectician of the type of Samkara or Kant. Instead, he is far more akin to Socrates, Buddha and Augustine pouring forth his deep feelings and the results of his inner realizations of truth.

Like Buddha and Socrates, Gandhi only stressed certain basic values and did not systematically elaborate, at an advanced intellectual level, the underlying philosophical assumptions and the sociological, political and economic implications of his theories. Hence there is no philosophical "system" of Gandhism in the sense of a conceptual construction of metaphysics and political theory which, for example, we find in Aristotle or Hobbes. Gandhism only signifies the reaffirmation of the old spiritual truths substantiated by the concrete social-political experiments and the intense subjective Sadhana of Gandhi himself. He had neither the inclination nor the genius to construct a great encyclopaedic intellectual system. He was a genius not of the intellect but of the spirit. The insistent urge of the social and political problems of the Indian people demanded immediate solutions and till the last moments of his life, he devoted all his time to meeting the pressing challenges. Thus Gandhism is not a systematic well-worked out political philosophy with explicitly and rationally clarified theoretical assumptions and clearly drawn out social and political propositions therefrom. Nor does it claim to apply only logical procedure, statistical tools and scientific methods as the social positivists and empirical political theorists do.

Mahatma Gandhi was not primarily a theoretical analyst perfecting the methodological concepts and procedural techniques for the

behavioural study of the social and political situation and the governmental process. He was a man of action and a leader who wielded considerable influence over men. But he was also a writer of force and power. His two big books, *Autobiography*<sup>1</sup> and *Satyagraha in South Africa*, reveal him as a writer in command of a moving pen. His writings are characterized by fervour and lucidity and reveal the personality of a man of profound sincerity. What impresses me most about Gandhi's character is his absolute sincerity. His devotion to truth was the uppermost factor in his character. His *Autobiography* is a revelation of the absolute sincerity of purpose and gentleness that characterised his personality. He has written more than sixty volumes. In all the writings of Gandhi from 1908 onwards, one finds a unity of theme with the minimum amount of contradiction, although like all creative minds, he was susceptible to the changing demands of the times and hence a kind of slow transition and evolution is marked in his works.<sup>2</sup>

But with all his greatness as a leader and his power of the pen, Gandhi cannot, in fairness, be considered a systematic social and political philosopher of the type of Plato and Hegel. Gandhi's greatness lay in his lofty character, his political and moral leadership, his inner intuitive experiences and his message of truth and Ahimsa. He was content with giving vent to immediate morally-oriented suggestions for the solution of the contemporary social, economic and political problems. He was modest enough not to claim to have originated any new system of philosophical or political thought. He said that he was only concerned with putting into practice the perennial truths contained in the great religious books and hence stated that there was no specific 'ism' like Gandhism.<sup>3</sup> But he also said at the Karachi Congress in 1931 that Gandhi may be dead but Gandhism is imperishable. There is, however, no contradiction involved here. When he repudiated the existence of any "ism" like Gandhism he was modest to disclaim being the builder of any theoretical architectonic and hinted at his role only of a social and political worker. Nevertheless, he felt that Gandhism, to the extent that it had as its central themes the eternal principles of *Satya* and *Ahimsa*, was immortal and would

1 In this book the references to Gandhi's *An Autobiography* or *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (English translation from the Gujarati by M. Desai), are, except where indicated otherwise, to the reprint of the year 1958, of the second edition, published by the Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad. The page numbers to most of Gandhi's other books are to the Navajivan Publishing House editions.

2 Jawaharlal Nehru, "Congress under Gandhi's Leadership", *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta, Signet Press, 1946), p. 314 : "... he (Gandhi) continued to develop his ideas, and sometimes in the process varied them through his writings."

3 Gandhi stated : "I do not claim to have originated any new principle. I have tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems. Well, all my philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said. You will not call it 'Gandhism'; there is no 'ism' about it." *Harijan*, March 28, 1936.

continue to have a response in the hearts and minds of people even after his physical demise.

The writings of Gandhi touch almost all the social, educational, cultural, economic and political problems of contemporary India. Although I miss in Gandhism the pure delight of theoretical metaphysics and conceptual construction, I am impressed by the comprehensiveness, realism and solidity in the political and economic ideas put forward by Gandhi.

Although not a system-builder in the academic sense of the term, Gandhi has expressed many ideas which are highly useful and relevant to the modern age. It is essential to study Gandhian thought by applying the *comparative* method to its analysis. The Gandhian economic notions may be assessed in the light of the ideas of Marx, Marshall, Pigou, Keynes, Schumpeter, Building, etc. Similarly Gandhi's concepts and propositions may be discussed in the light of the advances in political and juristic thought as found, for example, in the writings of Savigny, Duguit, Krabbe, Sorel, Barker, MacIver, Kelsen, Laski, Cole, etc. Only thus it is possible to locate the novelties in Gandhism.

There are a large number of common moral and psychological assumptions in Gandhi and those Western social scientists who believe that the social sciences should have an ethical orientation and should keep in view the realization of justice, disarmament, peace and fraternity. The common points between Gandhi and the western social idealists, pacifists, mutualists and humanists are considerable. But the moral personality of Gandhi adds an additional charm to his writings.

What Gandhism lacks in the shape of a systematic major book on advanced political theory like *the Republic* or *the Leviathan* written by the leader himself, is more than compensated by the life of the man. He practised the principles put forward by him and hence there is power of profound appeal in his writings. He demonstrated the seriousness of his teachings by the dedication of his life in their pursuit,—a work which no mere speculative thinker has done so far.

But although not an academic philosopher or a systematic concept-builder like Kant or Hegel, Gandhi had enough of the scientific spirit of quest in him. He was not a passive recipient of the scriptural wisdom of the country. He was, in a sense, a scientist "experimenting" with truth in his own life and in the life of the nation. Certainly he had a sharp mind.

In the writings of Gandhi we find the attempt to win the hearts of the readers by revealing to them his own experiences gained through "experiments" in the search of God as Truth through Ahimsa. Hence a subjectivist note pervades Gandhian literature. The emphasis on personal self-experience in Gandhi's writings may be regarded as a contribution to Indian literature wherein there has been thin and weak stress on the revelation of the writer's personality.

We have no knowledge of the inner history of Panini and Vyasa. In the writings of Samkara, Ramanuja, Sri Harsha and Tulsidasa, there is no revelation of their own personal conflicts and moral struggles as we find in those of St. Augustine or Rousseau or Tolstoy. The Indian seers and thinkers, perhaps, regarded confessions of personal experiences as unnecessary exhibitionism. Hence they wrote the minimum about themselves. Gandhi, on the other hand, is intensely self-conscious and always in his books and articles there is repeated reference to his personal experiences. Although a social and political leader, Gandhi, by temperament, was also introspective and subjective. This self-conscious subjectivism, in Gandhism, may be taken as almost a new note in Indian literature. We find some subjectivistic trends in Devendranath Thakur, Vivekananda, Ramatirtha, Shraddhananda and Tagore. But Gandhi carries that tradition considerably forward. Gandhian self-consciousness, however, was never a disguise and masquerade for that unwarrantable self-assertiveness which is carried to ridiculous and even repulsive extremes in Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*. Gandhi's subjectivism, to the contrary, has spiritual and not egoistic roots. The expressions of his spirit are also totally different from the megalomaniac fantasies of Mussolini and Hitler.

## 2. The Personality of Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhi's ideal, for himself, was to become a *Sthitaprajna*<sup>4</sup>—a person of steady intellect. He wanted to achieve a calmness of spirit and an integration of personality. He liked to listen to the soul and not to the cry of the multitude. He was always struggling to be sober, calm, quiet and composed. But in spite of his moral and spiritual attainments, Gandhi was not the serious, sombre ascetic. He was very human. He could laugh and laugh mirthfully. He could shed tears. Tears came to his eyes when the body of his devoted wife Kasturbai (1869-1944) was being cremated. He would cry in times of deep anguish, as he did in 1918.<sup>5</sup> But still Gandhi was a man of God who had attempted to transcend most of the normal human failings.

Schopenhauer regarded Buddha and Christ as the ideal men of history because they had renounced home life and taught self-abnegation. Oswald Spengler, on the other hand, regarded fact and power as more significant elements in history than contemplation and truth. But Mohandas Gandhi, as one of the epoch-making figures in India, combined both moral idealism and political success. He was not only a great figure in world history but also an angelic prophet. He was the combination of a God-seeking mystic and a moral dictator.

4 According to Mahatma Gandhi, the last eighteen verses of the second chapter of the *Bhagvadgita* (verses 55 to 72), indicate the pattern of life of "a *sthitaprajna* or the man of steady wisdom, i.e., a *satyagrahi*."—*Harijan*, April 7, 1946.

5 Rajendra Prasad, *Atmakatha* (in Hindi, Patna, Sahitya Sansara, 1947) pp. 113-15.

wielding political power by love. A truthful and gentle soul, he fought the battle of India's freedom with the weapon of non-violence. He was generous and unsophisticated but his historical greatness was also unquestioned. Politically, he was a greater figure than Savonarola, Luther and Calvin.

Political greatness signifies the strength to move people and to cast impressions on the changing form of the historical structure. In other words, it means the ability to enact intended effects on the stage of history. Ninus and Semiramis, Vesorges, Tiglath Pilaser, Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Augustus and Frederick Barbarossa were powerful figures and did in their times give a shake to history. They who are able to produce motion and dynamism on a large scale on the platform of history are world-historical individuals and heroes. They do aim to effectuate certain significant changes in the course of history and attempt to rule the destiny of other men. On the other hand, there are millions and millions of human beings who are born and die and are content to lead a normal and routine life. They find delight in their homes and neighbourhood. The demon of political ambition does not torment the mass of the people. They appear as the objects and not the subjects of history.

A good man may not always and necessarily be a great man in the historical sense. Goodness implies humility, gentleness and forgiveness. Saints and seers, in large numbers, who have led dutiful and religious lives and have allowed their bodies to languish and wither away in hills and forests were certainly good men but they have not necessarily been able to effectuate great action in the social and political spheres.

On the other hand, great men may not necessarily be good men. Pisistratus, Epaminondas, Julius Caesar, Aurangzeb, Napoleon and Mussolini were impelled by terrific arrogance and conquering designs. They were not noted for their spirit of charity and humanness. They wanted the acquisition and aggrandizement of political power. But no student of history will deny the attribution of greatness to these figures. The Egyptian pharaohs of the Twelfth and Eighteenth dynasties were great because they attempted the political expansion of the country. The Assyrian emperors who swore by violence, punitive justice and slaughter were also great in the historical sense. Charlemagne and Peter of Russia were great from the political angle of vision. Some of the rulers of the Mongol and Ottoman empires were great conquerors but had no spirit of service to man. By greatness, thus, we only mean the power to impress upon, shake and move, the social and political structure at a certain place and time. Greatness signifies the concentration of power and its utilization in the external relations of mankind. It is evident that greatness in this sense is a morally neutral concept. A great man may not necessarily represent the typification of decency and nobility. Nero, Mahmud of Ghazni and Nadir Shah have a place in the history of

Rome and western Asia but they were not virtuous. We may sometimes feel that a historical figure is lustful, vain, mean, revengeful and ambitious but, nonetheless, we have to consider him great if he performed some important action. Machiavelli, for example, regarded the political adventurer Cesare Borgia as his political hero.

A great man primarily embodies the qualities not of Sattva or illumination but of Rajas or dynamic action. Historical greatness is measured by the acquisition of external political authority and not by the cultivation of the sentiments of service and altruism. We can say that Vashishtha, Vidura and Vibhishana were good men but not great men. Ananda was a good man but not a great man. On the other hand, Ravana was great but not good. A good man may be content with the annihilation of personal egoism because his philosophy is to serve Paramartha. He may be too selfless and quiet to assert his powers and personality. He may like to follow the path of resignation and retirement rather than that of asserting the will to power. His aim is self-conquest and not the rule over others. Greatness, on the other hand, is acquired by successful self-assertion and, sometimes, by the proclamation of oneself as the conscious or unconscious agent of some vast historical idea-force.

Moral virtue and political grandeur may, sometimes, be synthesized in one personality. Ashoka, Harshavardhana, Lincoln and Wilson were both good and great. Gandhi also is an example of the combination of goodness and greatness. He was a great nationalist leader but political opportunism and personal self-seeking had no place in his life. The resort to lies, intrigues and conspiracies was not inserted in his political dictionary. Sometimes he has been compared to Muhammad and Khalifa Omar in the patriarchal simplicity of his life. He has the same place in the historical records of India as Washington and Jefferson have of America. He appeared as a political captain for the cause of distressed and embarrassed Indians, in South Africa, and on a far greater scale, in India. He was not merely a politician or a statesman, but a prophet and a seer of humanity like Lao-Tse, Buddha, Zoroaster and St. Paul.

### **3. Satyagraha in South Africa**

M. K. Gandhi returned to India in July 1891 after obtaining a barrister's degree from London.<sup>6</sup> But soon destiny sent him into another theatre of action. In April 1893 he started for Durban and from 1893 to 1914 he worked in South Africa for the restoration of justice to his fellow-countrymen who were subjected to degrading and mortifying discriminations. Indians had been going to Natal

For the biographical details of M. K. Gandhi, the following books may be consulted : D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma : Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, 8 Vols. (Govt. of India, Publications Division, 1960-63) Pyarelal Nair, *Mahatma Gandhi : The Last Phase* (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Press, 1956-58), 2 Vols. ; Henry S. L. Polak, *Mahatma Gandhi : The Man and His Mission* (Madras, 1931); Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York, Harper & Bros., 1950).

since the sixties of the last century as indentured labourers. The treatment meted to them and their descendants by the whites was humiliating. Gandhi, himself, in the course of his journey to South Africa and during his stay there met several indignities and humiliations. At Maritzburg he was pushed out of the train compartment in the cold winter night by a constable although he had a first class ticket. Once a Boer policeman "pushed and kicked" him into the street for walking past the footpath near the mansion of President Kruger in Pretoria. Such incidents vividly revealed to the sensitive mind of Gandhi, the abjectness and degradation of the Asian peoples in South Africa.<sup>7</sup> He determined to revolt against the tyranny of the white races. The Natal Indian Congress was formed on August 22, 1894, mainly at his suggestion. Gandhi rose as the defender of liberty and equality and became the acknowledged leader of the Indian community in the protracted Satyagraha movement from 1906 to 1914.

Earlier than the formal launching of Satyagraha, he had given evidence of his generous spirit by organizing an Indian ambulance corps of nearly four hundred Indians in the Boer War (1899-1902). He himself acted as a sergeant major. His sympathies were with the Boers but he felt that so long as the Indian subjects owed allegiance to the British imperial state it was their duty to accord support to it. In 1906 he organized a stretcher-bearing unit of nearly two dozen Indians in course of the Zulu rebellion. These activities<sup>8</sup> were organized by him in the hope that if Indians were to become full citizens they must perform their duties to the legally constituted government.

But because the Asiatic Department of Transvaal and General Smuts kept devising ways for inflicting additional affronts and insults on them, Gandhi organized and led the Satyagraha movement for nearly eight years. On October 28, 1913, he began the historic march from Newcastle to Volksrust at the head of nearly three thousand people. Finally, in 1914, Gandhi and Smuts arrived at a settlement. On January 21, 1914 Satyagraha was suspended and the £3 tax was repealed. Due to the efforts of Gandhi and Gokhale the indenture system was first prohibited in Natal and, later on, it was prohibited in other provinces of South Africa and the British empire.

Gandhi, through the Satyagraha movement, rendered great service to the cause of racial equality in South Africa. Although he was working there for the amelioration of the status of Indians, it was no mere parochial fight of a minority. At a meeting in 1914 in Johannesburg, Gandhi said that he concurred with the view that :

M. K. Gandhi, "What it is to be a Coolie", *Autobiography*, Part II, Chap. XIII, pp. 93-95.

In 1904 there was plague in Johannesburg and Gandhi organized a temporary hospital. In this same year, he established his Phoenix Settlement under the influence of Ruskin.

"behind that struggle for concrete rights lay the great spirit which asked for an abstract principle, and the fight which was undertaken in 1906, although it was a fight against a particular law, was a fight undertaken in order to combat the spirit that was seen about to over-shadow the whole of South Africa."<sup>9</sup>

It was a struggle for the vindication of the great truth that all men are free and equal. In the early stages of the movement also Gandhi had said :

"No matter what may be said, I will always repeat that it is a struggle for religious liberty. By religion, I do not mean formal religion, or customary religion, but that religion which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with our Maker. If you cease to be men, if, on taking a deliberate vow, you break that vow, in order that you may remain in the Transvaal without physical inconvenience, you undoubtedly forsake God. To repeat again the words of the Jew of Nazareth, those who would follow God have to leave the world, and I call upon my countrymen, in this particular instance, to leave the world and cling to God, as a child clings to its mother's breast."<sup>10</sup>

It was the pursuit of this spiritual philosophy which made Rev. C. F. Andrews (1871-1940), one of the great Christians of this century, the devoted friend and follower of the Mahatma since the days of the South African Satyagraha movement. Leo Tolstoy also in one of his letters to Gandhi had written :

"Your activity in the Transvaal, as it seems to us at this end of the world, is the most essential work, the most important of all the work now being done in the world, wherein not only the nations of the Christian but of all the world will unavoidably take part."<sup>11</sup>

#### **4. Gandhi as a Nationalist Leader**

The uniqueness of Gandhi's leadership lay in his successful application of the technics of non-violent Satyagraha to the political and social spheres. The South African Satyagraha was the first example of the political application of non-violence on a great scale. But it was only the prelude to Gandhi's far bigger work in India. Gandhi returned to India on January 9, 1915 after having performed a giant's work in South Africa.

In a speech at the inauguration of the Banaras Hindu University in 1916 he said : "If we are to receive self-government, we shall have

9 *Mahatma Gandhi: His Life, Writings and Speeches* (Madras, Ganesh & Co., 1921), 3rd edition, p. 104. Henceforward in this book, this volume will be referred to as *Speeches and Writings*.

10 Quoted in Joseph J. Doke : *M. K. Gandhi* (Varanasi, Sarva Seva Sangh, Reprint of 1959), p. 10.

11 Tolstoy's letter to Gandhi, dated September 7, 1910.

to take it. We shall never be granted self-government." In 1917, in Champaran, he demonstrated the efficacy of Satyagraha (April 16—June 6, 1917) in action.<sup>12</sup> He proclaimed a *hartal* against the Rowlatt Bill in 1919. The Non-co-operation movement (1920-1922) and the Civil Disobedience movement from 1930 to 1934, prepared the foundations for independence. On March 12, 1930 he undertook the historic march from the Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi, a distance of 150 miles. From 1920 onwards, due to the stiffening of the engine of British repression, sometimes it appeared that the Indians were fighting a losing battle. But an irrepressible optimist and an undaunted fighter, he was thoroughly opposed to British imperialism and had written in 1924 :

"The greatest menace to the world today is the growing, exploiting, irresponsible imperialism which through the enslavement of India is threatening the independent existence and expansion of the weaker races of the world. That imperialism is a negation of God."<sup>13</sup>

Several times, in 1922, in 1931, in 1933 and again in 1934 and 1941, the movement of Satyagraha had to be suspended. But Gandhi symbolized the unyielding sentiments of liberty. In all the moments of trial, his unshakable belief in the sovereignty of the spirit seemed to make the darkness of the present only a prelude to the glorious future. Against the vaunted and arrogant threats of Dyer, Birkenhead, Churchill and Amery, Gandhi stood unperturbed in the calmness of his fearless spirit. During the Second World War Gandhi first started the individual Satyagraha movement during 1940-41 (October 11, 1940—December 3, 1941). On April 9, 1942 he had publicly asked the Britishers to leave India. In August 1942 he proclaimed his utter irreconcilability to the perpetuation of the political inferiority of India and said : "I have travelled all over India as perhaps nobody in the present age has. The voiceless millions of the land saw in me their friend and representative, and I identified myself with them to an extent it was possible for a human being to do. I saw trust in their eyes, which I now want to turn to good account in fighting this empire upheld on untruth and violence." He championed an open rebellion in August 1942, and always refused to withdraw his stand. Even in the dark and gloomy days of 1943 he vindicated the conscience of India by undertaking at the age of seventy-four a fast of twenty-one days. Thus it is evident that he was unreconciled to India's political dependence.

It is difficult to make final and absolute pronouncements in history but it may safely be said that Gandhi was, in a great measure, the leader of Indian independence who led an almost elemental

12 In the *Harijan*, November 4, 1939, Gandhi wrote : "To my mind the most perfect demonstration of non-violence was in Champaran."

13 *Young India*, August 21, 1924.

struggle against the British Empire. He will be regarded as the liberator who deserves gratitude for the political emancipation of four hundred million human beings. I do not mean to minimize the achievements of the other Indian patriarchs and leaders like Dadabhai, Gokhale, Tilak—that foremost and indomitable veteran of Indian extremism, Lajpat Rai, Malaviya, Surendranath and others. All are great and deserve admiration. But history willed it so, that on the basis of the foundations built up by them through great sorrow, suffering, pain and persecution, Gandhi with the help of his colleagues and lieutenants like Motilal, C. R. Das, Patel brothers, Rajendra Prasad, Bose, Jawaharlal and others should erect the structure of Indian independence. Mass movements, on a great scale, in modern Indian politics, owed themselves primarily to Gandhi's initiative. He had almost an intuitive capacity to feel the political pulse of the people and that accounted for his political success. To the weak Indian people he appeared as a messiah of a new dispensation and symbolized the quest for swaraj and hence may be regarded as the Moses of India's freedom. His stress on *abhayam* or fearlessness was aimed to bring about a psychological revolution in India because he taught the people to stand erect and infused into them courage and the capacity of resistance to imperial power. Thus he had the good fortune of being the instrument of the world-spirit for India's independence and he performed the Herculean task of stimulating the Indian people for the performance of cooperative efforts for achieving independence. It may be said in all frankness that the great event of August 15, 1947, owes itself in a great measure to his leadership. It will be surely unfair to lose sight of the contributions of the terrorists and revolutionists, the I. N. A. of Subhas Chandra Bose, the socialists and of some of other political and social organizations, to Swaraj, but the Indian National Congress galvanized by the technics and moral fervour of Gandhian Satyagraha had the most significant role to play in the freedom movement in India from 1920 to 1947.

Gandhi will go down in history as the chief architect and builder of Indian independence. "The Great Soul in a beggar's garb", he manifested India's desire for national self-determination and as the leader of a vast number of human beings for over a quarter of a century, he triumphed as the embodiment of India's will to complete freedom from the chains of British imperialism. There were sceptics who stated in 1924-1927 and again in 1941 that Gandhi had to yield leadership but soon they were given convincing demonstrations of the hold of the Mahatma on the Indian people when the Salt Satyagraha (1930) and the Quit India movements began. Before his star rose on the Indian public firmament, India was, as Surendranath Banerjee had written "a nation in the making". When he was dead in January 1948, India was an independent political community. Like Rousseau's "legislator", Gandhi accepted the need of the unifying social spirit for a people and he succeeded in giving to the disorganized and disintegra-

ted Indian people a sense of the common good and the general will.<sup>14</sup> Although he could not prevent the "vivisection" of the country, at least, the alien rule was eliminated. This was certainly a great success.

Gandhi triumphed as the political leader of the semi-starved people of India and as the concrete embodiment of the aspirations of the mute millions.<sup>15</sup> It is historical blasphemy to represent him as the protagonist of the Indian bourgeoisie.<sup>16</sup> He collected money from the pockets of the rich to finance the activities of the Congress and his other social and constructive organizations but it is a travesty of truth to regard him as the political leader of any one section. He stood for the national demand and his mandate to leadership was based on the prolonged service of "the hungry and the naked millions." He made no elaborate plans about social revolution or capture of power but he was a solid social and political worker and his devotion to the cause of the nation is writ large on the modern history of India. Gandhi claimed to be the leader not merely of the feudal aristocrats or the middle-class intellectuals and the bourgeoisie but of the entire Indian population. In no sense can it be said that the Gandhian movement was the conscious or unconscious expression of the interests of the Indian capitalists and the bourgeoisie. Nor would it be correct to say that capitalists and Zamindars had joined the Gandhian movement in the hope that his non-violence was a safety-valve against the rising aspirations of the suppressed sections. Unless one can convincingly prove his case through relevant findings and correlations there is no use in doubting the motivation either of Gandhi or his followers. It is true, however, that a section of the capitalists and the bourgeoisie was interested in the Gandhian movement because due to the national agitation, the former were rescued from the rugged competition of the foreign capitalists. It is also true that due to political factors, Gandhi and the Indian National Congress were also opposed to commercial discrimination in favour of the British capitalists who had invested in India. But the Gandhian movement was an expression of the interests of all sections of the population. Gandhi's heart always had the interests of the 'dumb millions' as the prime consideration and the village was always the centre of his attention. He even said that as a villager he became one with the ocean of Indian humanity. Thereby he was, so to say,

14 John Macmurray, "Gandhi's Faith and Influence", S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *M. Gandhi* (Allahabad, Kitabistan, 1944), p. 189.

15 Amaury de Reincourt, *The Soul of India*, (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1960), completely minimises the dominant desires of the Indian masses of the twentieth century for political and economic betterment, when he says : "... with Gandhi it was the historyless masses of India who rose to political power and attempted to withdraw from contemporary history, to hark back to an immutable past."

16 The older thesis of Marxists like M. N. Roy about Gandhi being a leader of the Indian bourgeoisie is still being repeated by communists—E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *The Mahatma and the Ism* (New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1959), pp. x, 115.

the democratic spirit embodied. Only thus could the experiment of the independence of a vast sub-continent by mainly non-violent means succeeded. Gandhi's triumph meant the political realization of the rising Indian soul and not the victory of the bourgeoisie.

### 5. **Technics of Gandhi's Leadership : Prophecy and Politics**

What explains the phenomenal success of the London-trained Indian barrister who has been acclaimed by his devotees and admirers as the greatest Indian after Gautama Buddha, and perhaps the greatest figure in human history after Julius Caesar and Jesus Christ ?<sup>17</sup> Not a great military commander like Alexander or Napoleon, not a politician occupying great posts like Chancellor Bismarck or Prime Minister Gladstone, not an academic philosopher like Plato or Samkara, Gandhi was, nevertheless, a remarkable figure and leader. He did not claim any deep and profound learning in the ancient Sanskrit texts which was the great asset of Dayananda and Tilak. Gandhi's powers as an orator were also considerably limited. His speeches were severely simple, direct and pointed. There was no gesture and no attempt at the use of flamboyant and rhetorically elegant terminology. He was able, nevertheless, to acquire an amazing hold over Indian public opinion. The pettiest details about his life, movements and actions were flashed in the press. A vast section of the Indian people idolized him and it will not be an exaggeration to say that in a sense he was the greatest spokesman of nationalist Indian public opinion for over a quarter of a century.

It can be said that there were two roots of Gandhi's leadership. His elevated character as a saint, prophet or Mahatma was one. Another was his selfless dedication to the cause of the special uplift and political emancipation of the Indian masses. His leadership was the consequence of his prolonged dedication to the cause of the people. His authority over Indians had been acquired by long years of patient and selfless service. Gandhi's leadership was unique because to his political eminence he added the profundity of a saint and his message to the Indian people became so appealing because he simultaneously utilized the technics of political and prophetic leaders. He attempted in a sense to combine the spiritual and the temporal—the *sacerdotium* and the *imperium*. Hence perhaps no other leader during his life-time had that hold on public opinion which Gandhi had. But he always remained the simple, lovable, reasonable and sympathetic soul. For the secularist and the materialist, there might have been an element of enigma or inscrutability in Gandhi's leadership but a large section of the tradition-bound and religion-soaked Indian public almost deified him. The great secret of his influence was that he appeared to the Indian masses as a political leader giving hints of spiritual power. The masses considered

17 John H. Holmes, "The Nature of Gandhi's Greatness", in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *M. Gandhi*, pp. 120-22.

him a man of God and hence were responsive to the reception of his commands.

Gandhi was meek and humble and had no arrogant pretensions to any supermanhood either of the Dionysian or the Apollonian or the Faustian type.<sup>18</sup> He was a saint who wanted to atone for his own sins and faults. Although a great political leader, his inner heart delighted not in discussions with diplomats, statesmen and governors but in serving the sick and the poor whom he considered the neglected children of God. But he was also a venerated saintly leader offering his counsel to all who sought his guidance. After August 15, 1947, he was the moral adviser to the new Indian nation. In the eyes of a large section of Indian mankind, he was more of a saint aiming to know and practise the divine way and not a politician in the narrow and sophistic sense of the term. His admirers sometimes compared him to Christ and Krishna and would never put him in the category of Disraeli or Bismarck. In the early twenties some critics regarded him queer and eccentric. Churchill called him "naked fakir" in 1931 at the time of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Some of the die-hard British imperialists were even determined "to crush" him and his movement. But he became victorious and his simple saintly personality revealed its Himalayan stature and after 1920 almost assumed the dimensions of a mighty spirit.

As a leader, Gandhi furnished an example of what Max Weber would call "charismatic" authority.<sup>19</sup> His power was not due to his being a representative of the ecclesiastical and traditional forces of Hindu society. Neither were his power and influence based on the assumption and possession of some high and dignified office. He was not a czar or imperator or a leader of "machine politics" in the American sense. He, on the other hand, built the foundations of his leadership through great suffering. His power and authority were really "charismatic" because they were based upon his own moral and spiritual discipline. He was derided, ridiculed, and once even assaulted by his own countrymen but his mighty spirit rose victorious. His was the power not of the body and the material forces but of the spirit. He rose to eminence by dint of tenacious loyalty to spiritual principles and self-confidence and his leadership was attained through heroic sufferings in the path of what he regarded

<sup>18</sup> Dionysian and Apollonian are terms taken from Greek theology. Dionysus was the god of wine and drama. Apollo was the god of wisdom. Nietzsche in his *Birth of Greek Tragedy* has symbolized them as contrasted idea-patterns of Hellenic culture. "Faustian" refers to the wander-lust of the modern Western-man as pictured in Goethe's *Faust*.

<sup>19</sup> Max Weber has distinguished between three kinds of authority : (a) traditional, (b) rational or legal and (c) charismatic. "There is the authority of the extraordinary and personal gift or grace (charisma), the absolutely personal devotion and personal confidence in revelation, heroism or other qualities of individual leadership."—Max Weber, *Essay in Sociology* (Oxford, University Press, 1946), pp. 78-79.

as the divine way or the Marga of Hari. His personality showed the strength of individual purification and he claimed to follow the dictates of the inner conscience which indicates the intimations of the supreme spirit. Hence his charisma expressed itself in the transforming power of his distinctive spiritually-oriented character. Several interviewers have testified to the magnetic<sup>20</sup> element in his character which evoked loyalty. The almost natural acceptance of his leadership by millions and millions of people was made possible only because of charismatic authority.

Real importance and distinction are determined not by external width but by inner depth. Because Gandhi preached and practised truth and Ahimsa, hence his greatness was not a formation of external power but was related to the depths of the human soul. He was one of the great embodiments of the old Indian values of spirituality, morality, austerity and devout saintliness. He, thus, reminded the Indian people of the old sages and moral prophets and was considered as a link in the traditions of Vashishtha, Buddha, Mahavira and Tulsidas. Gopal Krishna Gokhale said about him :

“In all my life, I have known only two men who have affected me spiritually in the manner that Mr. Gandhi does—our great patriarch Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji and my late master Mr. Ranade—men before whom not only are we ashamed of doing anything unworthy, but in whose presence our very minds are afraid of thinking anything that is unworthy.”

Gandhi's leadership was reinforced by his spiritual personality. He pleaded for the incorporation of moral and spiritual values in politics.<sup>21</sup> His constant references to God<sup>22</sup> and the ‘inner voice’, his daily prayers and his solemn vow of Brahmacharya, since 1906, when he was only thirty-six, made him a saint and the Indian public revered him. Gandhi, thus, rather strangely enough, rose to success by adopting the vows of voluntary poverty and austeries. He achieved great eminence by having made the traditional moral technics also the efficacious instruments of political action. Thus fasting, suffering and prayer were turned by him into potent instruments of mass political action. His fasts in 1924, 1933, and 1943 and at other occasions, touched deep emotional chords in the public heart, and

20 Even the agnostic Jawaharlal Nehru, in his *Autobiography* (London, John Lane The Bodley Head, 1939) p. 255, refers to the “magic touch” of Gandhi. He felt Gandhi’s indefatigable energy to be “coming out of some inexhaustible spiritual reservoir.” (*Ibid.*, p. 254). He recognizes that “often the unknown stared at us through his face” (p. 254), and acknowledges that Gandhi “gave the impression of tremendous inner reserves of power”. (*Ibid.*, p. 130).

21 V. P. Varma, “Gandhi and Marx,” *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, June, 1954.

22 M. K. Gandhi in the *Harijan* (1940): “Who am I? I have no strength save what God gives me. I have no authority over my countrymen save the purely moral. If He holds me to be a pure instrument for the spread of non-violence. He will give me the strength and show me the way.”

the reaction of public opinion was almost immediate and instantaneous in his favour.

Gandhi's leadership was based on self-abnegation. Having renounced the desire for fame and wealth, no temptations could seduce him nor could threat overawe him. He became the centre of homage and reverence as a man of God. His ideal was to become, in the language of the Gita, a Bhakta or a Trigunatita and to subjugate the passions and prejudices of the lower empirical ego. He, hence, transformed his social and political actions into the Sadhana for the intuitive oneness with God. Due to the power of his personal self-abnegation, he was able to evoke, to some extent, the reverence associated with the Avatar, in the illiterate sections of the Indian society.

He was neither a visionary, nor a utopian philosopher nor a theoretical conceptualist. He believed in Karmayoga. He was a Karmayogi incessantly toiling for the realization of his ideals.

Gandhi symbolized prophetic leadership.<sup>23</sup> His simple dress, his vegetarianism, the staff in his hand and the seating posture that he took up, like Buddha, at the time of making speeches, served to turn conservative religious opinion in his favour.

Gandhi was devoted to truth and his constant "confessions" of his own failures<sup>24</sup> and sins also eventually turned public opinion in his favour. He did not want to keep anything hidden or secret. Even the confession of his Himalayan blunder in April, 1919, after the mob violence in Nadiad and Ahmedabad did not eventually antagonize Indian public opinion. Thus we see that the "confessional" technic of St. Augustine and Rousseau was used by Gandhi in the field of public leadership.

Gandhi was always in quest of the purified moral will. Hence, like Chaitanya, he attempted to find a place for himself and his teachings not merely in the intellect and emotions of men but in their hearts and souls. He appealed to the nobility of human nature and was not primarily concerned with the quantitative increase in the number of his followers.

Gandhi assumed leadership at a time when Indian public opinion was becoming anti-British. The coercive technics used by the British for recruiting soldiers during the first world war had produced great bitterness among the public. The propaganda of the Home Rule Leagues under the leadership of Tilak and Annie Besant had generated a longing for Swarajya. The Jallianwala Bagh massacres of April 13, 1919 had thoroughly alienated the Indian

<sup>23</sup> Gandhi's sense of "mission" is in the prophetic line. In the *Harijan* (1940) he wrote : "God has blessed me with the mission to place non-violence before the nation for adoption."

<sup>24</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, "Congress under Gandhi's Leadership", *The Discovery of India*, p. 315 : "Even in his apparent failures he has seemed to grow in stature."

people. Gandhi appeared in 1919 and 1920 as the vindicator of the political aspirations of India. He had the generosity also to struggle for the Moslem brethren who were alienated against the British for the betrayal of Turkish interests and hence he championed the Khilafat movement. Tilak with his Home Rule agitation from April 1916 to October 1918, had begun the practice of bringing mainly the lower middle classes and, to a small extent, the masses into politics; Gandhi carried this trend greatly forward. He claimed to be "a peasant and a weaver,"<sup>25</sup> and he definitely transformed the Congress into a mass organization though its leadership remained middle class. He succeeded, thus, in making the Congress a very powerful political organization.

Both in India and the West, he began to be regarded as completely identified with the mass nationalist movement. He was the sole representative of the Indian National Congress at the Second Round Table Conference in London in 1931. His leadership, thus, rested on the fact of his being the most significant symbol of India's national fight. He confessed :

"That I respond to the mass mind and the masses know me instinctively is a fact which cannot be gainsaid."<sup>25</sup>

Earlier than the triumphs of Mussolini, Stalin and Hitler, Gandhi used to address half a million human beings in his meetings. He was a mass leader of a gigantic stature. If authority over millions unsupported by any kind of external coercion and totalitarian dictation be the indicator of leadership, Gandhi has been one of the greatest mass leaders in human history. He was indeed a world-historical individual of a titanic stature.

He was never a mere contemplative mystic or devotee or a conserver of the moral values contained in the old scriptures like the Upanishads, the Gita and the Ramayana. He combined the two aspects of conservation and new creation in his works. Hence he also prescribed social and economic change. In his championship of change he appeared as a puissant social and political worker for the redemption of the sins, sufferings and deprivations of contemporary India. Gandhi gave to the Indian people a concrete and comprehensive programme of change. He advocated Hindu-Muslim unity, village regeneration and uplift, Khadi and cottage industries, basic education, the abolition of untouchability and the winning of Indian independence. He thus showed his intense interest in change in mundane things and values.

Gandhi used the power of effective journalism to accentuate his leadership. In South Africa he edited *The Indian Opinion*.<sup>26</sup>

25 Press Statement by M. K. Gandhi, July 12, 1944.

26 *The Indian Opinion* was launched in 1904. In 1919, Gandhi took up the editorship of *Young India*. *The Harijan* was established on February 11, 1933.

His *Young India* became the Bible of the rising Indian nationalism. His *Harijan* defined the course of India's nationalistic politics for a number of years. The press, as the most powerful source in formulating and moulding public opinion, was fully utilized by Gandhi, who had a mastery over English prose-style. Besides his own papers, a great part of the nationalist press in India helped to strengthen his leadership.

Gandhi deliberately tried to live as an Indian peasant. At the famous trial in 1922, he said that he was, by profession, a peasant and weaver. This was the case of a middle class intellectual and former barrister deliberately emancipating himself from the snobberies of his class and identifying himself with the styles of living of those in the lower strata of society. The Indian people found in him only an accentuated embodiment of themselves and hence they clung to him. In his tastes and in his simplicity and even in some of the so-called "paradoxes"<sup>27</sup> and contradictions of his life, he was the magnification of the Indian peasant. But his identification with the Indian peasant's external mode of action and living was never a mere technic of political manipulation. It was genuine. Gandhi wrote that in every fibre of his being, he was one of the dumb millions, "and without them I am nothing and I do not even want to exist." Like Buddha, he adopted the language of the people. Buddha preached in Prakrit. Gandhi took recourse to Hindustani and Gujarati, as far as possible. His spirit clamoured for removing the great poverty of the Indian masses and because every Indian could not get adequate clothes, hence, Gandhi only wore a loin-cloth and occasionally a shawl. He took up the loin-cloth on September 21, 1921 and tenaciously clung to it throughout his life. Indians have a great veneration for simplicity. Buddha became great not as a Sakya prince of Kapilavastu but as a monk. Gandhi's efforts resulted in dynamizing the simple Indian peasants and labourers with a great and active spirit. He might have been an "enigmatic personality" for Mr. Amery in March, 1943, but the simple Indian peasant recognized in him their own will to independence writ large<sup>28</sup> and his success symbolized the awakening of the mighty sleeping titan—the Indian peasant.

As a political leader, Gandhi had the capacity to arouse and to dramatize public opinion. In 1920-21, he promised to bring swaraj in one year—the last date fixed was December 31, 1921. Although the promise proved to be fantastic, it heightened the emotional appeal of his leadership. His famous Dandi march from March 12 to April

27 Jawaharlal Nehru, "Paradoxes", *Autobiography*, p. 528 : "Again I think of the paradox that is Gandhi."

28 Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* (1940) : "The unsophisticated masses have unconsciously and instinctively accepted me as their friend, guide and servant. There has never been the slightest difficulty in my feeling one with them or their feeling one with me. I never had to make any effort to draw them towards me, whether here or in South Africa. I cannot account for this bond except by attributing the phenomenon to the power of love."

6, 1930, excited Indian public opinion to a tremendous degree. He was compared to Rama on his mission to Lanka and to Krishna.<sup>29</sup> His famous *mantra* of "Do or Die" in 1942 had a similar emotional and imaginative appeal.

Gandhi's trip to the Round Table Conference in 1931 brought English public opinion, to some degree, on his side. He lived in the East End of London, fraternized with the labourers, absolutely stuck to his daily prayers with great fidelity and had his interview with the King-Emperor George V in his simple dress. He charmed the English people with his deep humility and simplicity.

There were a few occasions, when Gandhi had to face the hostility of public opinion. His crusade against untouchability, his consent to the ending of the life of a calf in deep physical agony,<sup>30</sup> and what was regarded as his pro-Moslemism did turn conservative Hindu opinion against him but the deeper sentiments of the public were always in his favour.

29 Cf. John H. Holmes, *My Gandhi* (New York, Harper & Bros, 1953) p. 108 : "But it is Jesus, be it said in all reverence, who offers truest comparison with Gandhi."

30 *Young India*, March 20, 1930.

## 2

# GANDHI'S ROLE IN WORLD HISTORY AND POLITICS

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### 1. Gandhi as a Great Asian

The reawakening of Asia is one of the dominant phenomena of the modern world. Since the Meiji Restoration in Japan, slowly, Asia has realized a sense of political realism. The Russo-Japanese war, the rise of the Swadeshi movement in India and the Young Turk movement in Turkey as well as the Chinese Revolution of 1911 unmistakably demonstrated that the people of Asia were becoming imbued with a new spirit of political assertiveness. Gandhi had the vision to interpret the struggle for Indian freedom as the process of the liberation of Asia. He wrote :

"Freedom for India will bring hope to Asiatics and other exploited nations. Today, there is no hope for the Negroes, but Indian freedom will fill them with hope."<sup>1</sup>

Through his leadership of the Indian freedom movement, indirectly, he has helped the revitalization of Asian political consciousness.

Gandhi was proud of being born in Asia, because it was in ancient Asia that flourished all the great religious teachers and prophets.<sup>2</sup> Hegel has truly said : "In Asia arose the light of Spirit, and therefore the history of the world." Gandhi's triumph also indirectly symbolized the emergence into prominence of the old traditional Asiatic soul as manifested in the personalities and teachings of the Jewish prophets, Buddha and Confucius. He was the embodiment of the old Asian spirit of quest for justice, moderation, generosity and a direct intuitive apprehension of reality.

But to the members of the white race proud of their so-called "White man's burden", Gandhi also appeared as the quintessence of the new defiant spirit of modern Asia. He wanted Asia to be dynamic once again and shake off her lethargy and inertia.<sup>3</sup> He

1 Press Statement by M. K. Gandhi, July 12, 1944.

2 Gandhi's speech at the First Asian Relations Conference. *Report of the Proceedings and Documentation of the First Asian Relations Conference, 1947* (New Delhi, Asian Relations Organization, 1948).

3 In his appeal, "To Every Japanese", *Harijan*, July 26, 1942, Gandhi stated : "I was thrilled when in South Africa I learnt of your brilliant victory over the Russian arms."

could not tolerate patronization and domination. His Satyagraha struggles in South Africa were aimed against the infective venom of racial supremacy which is mainly the product of modern western history. Gandhi, to the contrary, symbolized the spirit of racial fraternity. At the Asian Relations Conference at New Delhi in April, 1947, he said : "Asia shall live and live as free as even western nations." He championed the claims of the Asiatic peoples to an honourable place amidst the comity of world nations. He wanted the equality and freedom of the Asian and African peoples to be recognized. In his letter to President Roosevelt on July 1, 1942, Gandhi had written :

"I venture to think that the Allied declaration that the Allies are fighting to make the world safe for the freedom of the individual and for democracy sound hollow, so long as India and for that matter Africa are exploited by Great Britain, and America has the Negro problem in her own home."

Asia had, generally, ceased to be a significant independent category in world politics from the fifteenth century onwards. But Gandhi's rise led to the intensification of a new Asian consciousness and the work of the Mahatma as the awakener of the East to its '*lebensraum*' is, indeed, significant.

Gradually, not only some of the great leaders of Asiatic and African independence but also the leaders in the struggles of suppressed minorities and nationalities in the U.S.A. and Europe looked to him for guidance. Some years ago, in Alabama, an attempt was made by the Negro minority to apply the Gandhian technic of non-violent resistance.<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi, however, did not stand for an Asian block versus the Western block. At the meeting of the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi on April 1 and 2, 1947, he advised the rising nations of Asia to harness their efforts for the eventual realization of one world. The message of Asia had been one of love and truth and he hoped that this message stressed by Zoroaster, Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Mohammad, Krishna, Rama and others would conquer the West and this conquest would be loved by the West itself.

When Gandhi was fallen, Asia almost felt that it had lost its champion. Undoubtedly, more than Sun-Yat-Sen and Chiang-Kai-Shek, more than Kamal and Ibn Saud and more than any other Asiatic leader, Gandhi will be regarded as the greatest Asiatic of the present century. Indeed, he may be regarded as one of the greatest figures in Asiatic history after Gautama Buddha.

## **2. Gandhi's Message to Mankind**

Every great book contains some permanent message for humanity.

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4 In Montgomery, Alabama, Martin Luther King Jr. led a bus boycott in 1955-56 to end racial discrimination in bus accommodation. He carried on other activities also on Gandhian and near Gandhian lines.

It is written in a certain historical context, and hence, necessarily, it does contain some messages which are relevant only to the existing situation. But it must also enunciate some permanent ideals for humanity. For example, the *Shakuntalam* of Kalidasa, Goethe's *Faust* and Gandhi's *Autobiography* do enshrine some permanent message for humanity although they are conceived in a particular historical context. The *Bhagavadgita* was written in a certain historical situation and it does contain some elements which were only temporarily valid but its greatness lies in its permanent message. The books written by Gandhi are also the products of a certain historical context. Some parts of the Gandhian teachings were meant for the solution of certain immediate problems but the great importance of Gandhism lies in the renewed stress on some of the permanent elements like truth, non-violence and purity.

Gandhi had the noble attributes of a teacher and prophet of mankind and hence Romain Rolland regarded him as the Saint Paul of our times. He heralded a moral dispensation for a tormented humanity and hence he was much more than the liberator of a country. His achievements are not confined to bringing independence to four hundred millions. Certainly he embodied in himself some of the noblest ideals of ancient Hinduism; certainly he was the greatest Indian political leader from 1920 to 1948; certainly he was the champion of Asiatic aspirations for complete emancipation from Western imperialism but it is also true that he was a moral leader of mankind and his message constitutes an addition to the heritage of man. The immediate and spontaneous sense of sorrow and grief that went round all the corners of the world at the news of his pathetic and calamitous demise was only an indication that Gandhi's message was significant for mankind. Leon Blum said : "...I feel the same sorrow as if I had lost someone near and dear."

The true revolutionaries in human history are not the dictators and the warriors but the great teachers, prophets, philosophers and scientists who create revolution in society by the accumulated impact of their teachings. It can truly be said that the real revolutionaries were not Philip of Macedon but Plato, not Caesar but Cicero, not Clarendon but Newton and not Hitler but Mohandas Gandhi. Unlike Goethe, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the Mahatma was not a prophet of the "will to be" or the "will to power". He cherished, to the contrary, "the will to suffer". He was meek, humble, generous, forgiving and compassionate and hence, as a moral revolutionary, he has been regarded as the modern Saint Francis. His personality appeared as the synthesis of the old eastern tradition of philosophic disinterestedness and pious sincerity and the modern western traditions of social equality and political liberty. The life of Gandhi, as a moral revolutionary was a vindication of the noble truth of the great scriptures that one grain of truth is more powerful than mountains of falsehoods. He stated :

"I have often said if there is one true Satyagrahi it would be enough. I am trying to be that true Satyagrahi."

Belief in the spiritual point of view often made Gandhi champion a cause which, to the majority, appeared not to have much chance of success. He had the courage to stand alone for the vindication of what he considered the truth. He said :

"I belong to the tribe of Columbus and Stevenson who hoped against hope in the face of heaviest odds."

His lonely pilgrimage in Noakhali in Bengal was a demonstration of his faith in his mission in quest of truth. His determination in 1946-1948 to end the blood bath of the communal orgy of violence is the story of dignified suffering and epic sublimity and convincingly demonstrates his character as a moral revolutionary. He appeared as a saviour of souls and not the wrecker of civilizations because he came to build and not to destroy.

With feeble body but the stubborn and persistent nobility of his soul, Gandhi as the moral revolutionary represented the defiance of the traditions of Western power-politics illustrated in the theories of Thrasymachus, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Cecil Rhodes and Treitschke. In place of the determinate sovereignty of the centralized government, Gandhi was a champion of individual freedom. Against the exalted Hegelian glorification of the rational actuality of the omnicompetent state, Gandhi taught the dignity of the humble man. Furthermore, as a counterpoise to the dreaded cult of bureaucratic omnipotence, he stood for the claims of moral conscience and the small community.

By his insistence on the negation of politics of power and the application of purity to politics, Gandhi has restressed the aspiration of the noble humanity of all ages. In his public actions, he was guided not by prudence or expediency but by the simple canon of charity and love. This made his appeal irresistible and he became, in a sense, the spokesman of the conscience of mankind. Gandhi stood for the realization of the values of uprightness, candour and purity even in political conduct. As a pilgrim of the spirit, he showed an unwavering resolve to apply only methods of civility and gentleness against his most ruthless political antagonists.

Gandhi has given the message of *concordantia* for mankind. His ideal was : "concord in the place of discord, peace in the place of strife, progress in the place of retrogression and life in the place of death."<sup>5</sup> Indians were primarily interested in him as a leader ; outsiders were mainly concerned with him as the teacher of peace and concord. In India, Gandhi primarily appeared as a social and political leader and taught that political freedom would be the basis of economic security and constructive social enrichment of the masses. Hence he stressed the attainment of Swaraj. But to the world outside, Gandhi prescribed not a political but a moral cure. He preached a

brotherly union of hearts—*concordantia*.<sup>6</sup> On July 23, 1939, he wrote a letter to Adolf Hitler to plead the cause of humanity. He wrote :

"Friends have been urging me to write to you for the sake of humanity. But I have resisted their request because of the feeling that any letter from me would be an impertinence. Something tells me that I must not calculate, and that I must make my appeal for whatever it may be worth. It is quite clear that you are today the one person in the world who can prevent a war which may reduce humanity to the savage state. Must you pay that price for an object, however worthy it may appear to you to be ? Will you listen to the appeal of one who has deliberately shunned the method of war not without considerable success ?"

Gandhi had the spiritual vision of the unity of all mankind and also believed in the ideal of world federation. Against the unreasonable doctrine of imperialist exploitation and elitist domination he preached the profound cult of the innate sanctity of human life.

Gandhi has taught the ideal of perfection of character. As a prophet of human perfection, he also would have said "Be ye as perfect as your father in Heaven." He taught the negation of the bondage to the flesh and pleaded for the recovery of faith in God and his mercy. Gandhi had realized that moral perfection meant the governance of one's conduct by the canon of pure living. He taught the importance of personal purification and perfection as the necessary foundation also for social, national and international harmony.

Increasing perfection of character results in the attainment of balanced equanimity and the negation of psychological contradictions. Psychoanalysis points out that the real cause of misery and conflict is the division of personality. Sociologists and social psychologists have made us aware of the increasing trend towards psychopathic and neurotic elements in modern civilization, consequent upon the disintegration of the personality of man. This would strengthen the case for the Gandhian emphasis on the practice of the moral vows for the purpose of integration of character, because there was a spiritual unity running throughout Gandhi's life which was full of ceaseless activities.<sup>7</sup> Hence his message for the moral unification of emotions and reason and the coherence of personality, which is also implicitly the concept of *Vyavasayatmika buddhi*, is significant for the disturbed and unhappy persons throughout the world.

(*Cf.* the lines of Whitman :

"Be not disheartened—Affection shall solve the problems of Freedom yet;  
Those who love each other shall become invincible."

George Catlin in his article in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *Mahatma Gandhi*, 2nd ed., p. 371, says : "His philosophy, therefore, although not in one sense at all new, (as he frequently admitted) is yet, in another sense, very new, very topical, and a devouring fire against the stubble of hypocrisy and of scientific philosophies of society falsely so-called." (Our Italics)

For a divided and bewildered world, Gandhi has re-asserted the moral approach to the solution of the problems of man, because never was he a moral relativist or nihilist. His message of non-violence, welfare and peace has moved the hearts of the sensitive peoples of a considerable section of the world and stressed ethical idealism. Gandhi, a product of the semi-urbanized Hindu society of Kathiawad, represented in his person the values of abnegation, asceticism and austerity which are dear to the Hindu and Buddhist heart. As an ethical idealist he has taught the doctrine of the incorporation of moral values in the texture of our civilization and in place of lust, pride and cupidity, has stressed the value of universal love. He teaches that man has to be consciously moulded into becoming a moral animal, because he is not merely a political animal, as Aristotle had pointed out, but basically he is a moral entity and the Atman.

Gandhi had a great appeal for the advocates of a Christian way of life because his message re-stressed the virtues of the Gospels. Several western students of human behaviour soon found in him the moral and spiritual genius who had divined the impending catastrophe of human civilization unless man was to undergo a moral regeneration. To some of the Westerners, Gandhi appeared as a new Socrates who was one of those who "have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord." Gandhi's devotion to truth and non-violence made some of the western pacifists regard him almost as the new Christ, born this time not in Bethlehem but in Kathiawad. Sometimes he was regarded as the first Christian politician since Jesus Christ. Some sections of the Western public genuinely regarded him as the greatest Christian after Christ.<sup>8</sup> Some of them regarded him as the synthesis of William Penn and Leo Tolstoy. One of the earliest biographers of Gandhi was a Christian—Joseph J. Doke (1861-1913), Baptist Minister at Johannesburg. Some of the greatest admirers of Gandhi in the West like Rolland and Holmes were devout Christians.

He also accepted the inner oneness of all existence in the cosmic spirit or God. His life was dedicated to the realization of the teachings of the Vedas and the Gita that the one supreme spirit pervades all existence—*Isa Vasyamidam Sarvam*—and all living beings are the representations or manifestations of the eternal divine being.

### **3. Gandhi's Place in World History**

Gandhi belongs to the category of the elect of world history. He attempted to leave the world better than he found it and the void

8 Joan H. Holmes, "The Greatest Man since Jesus Christ" in *Gandhi Memorial Peace Number, The Visvabharati Quarterly* (1949), p. 265, feelingly writes : "... Gandhi will live and assert his magic influence upon the souls and hearts of men for ever. For us, however, it is finished. That ineffable presence, that sweetest of all smiles, those eyes that had depths of beauty like visions of the eternal, that infinite tenderness and grace, that lovely hospitality of friendship, it is all gone with the frail and feeble body that fell beneath the shot of the assassin's pistol." (Our Italics.)

created by his death can hardly be ever perhaps fulfilled. He was not only the prophet of peace and the advocate of unity and brotherhood, he has been the martyr of his ideals. Thus his death imparted a dramatic finale to his teachings. The inexorable hand of Necessity or an ineluctable Destiny cut him down at the hour of his victory. Thus, by a tragic irony of Fate, Death had to put the final seal of conquest on the career of this man whose life was an unremitting toil in the cause of man's spiritual renaissance. But the death of Gandhi, as he himself used to say, only meant the release of the immortal soul from the chains of the body. The spirit is always alive and his martyrdom will continue to shed radiance on his strength of character, purity of motivation, sense of moral responsibility and tenacity of purpose. His belief in the spiritual interpretation of history receives additional authenticity from this act of sacrifice, because his end glorifies the life of dutiful struggle for the assertion of the concepts of conscience, common welfare and universal good. Gandhi would hold that the generally prevalent concept of freedom as the power to do or forbear from doing any act upon preference of the will was inadequate. He always, hence, attempted to do the absolute right but this fidelity to the canon of right eventually cost him his life. Gandhi's martyrdom, nevertheless, immortalizes the categorical maxims of moral faith, duty and non-violence and will be regarded as a vindication of the power of the human spirit to suffer in a just cause. Thus, against the prerogatives of external compulsion and tyranny, Gandhi's spirit of self-immolation vindicates the sanctity of inner moral disposition and freed conscience. Voluntary acceptance of death is the sanctified act of atonement or Prayashchitta for the sins of oneself and others and it carries belief even into the hearts of the antagonists and the sceptics. He was not in the least afraid of dying for the safeguarding of his ideals. He always, indeed, welcomed death in a noble cause. It can only be hoped that the lamentable tragedy enacted by Nathuram Vinayak Godse in New Delhi on January 30, 1948 at 5.06 p.m., may prove to be the most potent warning against any future act of fanatical wickedness and human madness on a great scale.

His assassination was absolutely un-Hindu. It was not the act of organized Hinduism but was the deed of two perverted and misguided Brahmin fanatics from Maharashtra. The apparent reason of his martyrdom was political. He was regarded by some persons as the clever supporter of the political interests of the foreign state of Pakistan and as being blind to the cause of Hindu sufferers and refugees from Bengal and Punjab. Godse said in the Court : "I sat brooding intensely on the atrocities perpetrated on Hinduism and its dark and deadly future if left to face Islam outside and Gandhi inside." It had been an act of generosity on the part of Gandhi to persuade the reluctant Indian Government to pay over fifty crores of rupees to Pakistan and thereby honour a commitment, even when India and Pakistan were colliding over Kashmir. Certainly he was

never a danger to the Indian state and he was not murdered because he was a threat to the Indian Government. Hence his self-immolation is not political in the same sense as that of Socrates or Jesus Christ. He was not killed for "reason of the state". Neither was his murder a deliberate act of any organized government.

Both in his life and his death, Gandhi justified the effectiveness of his humanity. He wanted to be the integral man identified with his great ideals. From a "coolie barrister", he voluntarily became a "farmer and weaver" and finally became a martyr as a prophet of peace and good will. Nearly thirty-five years before Gandhi's tragic end, Gopal Krishna Gokhale had truly remarked : "He is without doubt made of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made." He was essentially a lover of man and it has been said that like Christ who is reported to have said, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,' Gandhi also by the last movement of his hand, forgave his assassin. His last words were 'Hey Ram' (O ! God).

Gandhi triumphed in his death as a moral conquerer. From the physical standpoint he is dead but he will be celebrated in the annals of his country and in the records of the world and will have an eminent place in world history. He will be regarded as a comprehensive and ever-expansive soul—the Mahan Atman. To a sceptical world, he attempted to reveal the value of saintliness.

His martyrdom has released the forces for the revivification of the spiritual approach to politics. His life and personality will continue to be the sources of inspiration to future thinkers and philosophers and he will be revered as prophet of Ahimsa. He will be always a force in the ethicization of politics because he stood for the sanctity of Ahimsa which implies creative positive love and universal rational will for the realization of the highest good of all. Gandhi's role in world history was mighty because he was an energetic soldier of God. One of the great leaders of men and action, he will also be venerated as the teacher who preached and practised the commensurability of non-violent means and truthful ends.

A man engaged in intense social and political action, Gandhi firmly believed in Moksha or eternal blessedness to be realized by love and service and his personality will continue to be a source of guidance and enlightenment for seekers of God.

He preached faith and strength in the days of gloom and frustration<sup>9</sup> and amidst the atmosphere of disillusionment and alienation in the world his memories and heritage symbolize the hope, faith and confidence of creative good will. Gandhi unlike Oswald

R. Rolland, "Homage from a Man of the West to Gandhi", in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 272 writes: "It seems to us that it (Gandhi's doctrine) is called to play in the world the role of those great monasteries of the Christian Middle Ages, wherein were preserved, as on an islet in the midst of the surging ocean, the purest treasure and moral civilization, the spirit of peace and of love, the serenity of the spirit."

Spengler, does not merely offer the gloomy philosophy of the decline of western civilizations but, like a world-teacher offers the hope of the rejuvenation of cultures through including and embodying moral and spiritual dynamic in them.

He was an inspired soul and a man of deep faith and love.<sup>10</sup> In future, he will be revered as the figure who trod over the course of history in the grandeur of his peasant-like simplicity and to future generations he will be the symbol of a transformed and regenerated humanity. The stress on moral and spiritual approach to politics only serves to illustrate the prophetic character of Gandhi's role in world history. In a distracted world, his deathless spirit symbolizes the quest for moral redemption and liberation of the spirit and for ages he will be reckoned as the prophet of the divine kingdom of truth, love and peace. He will be regarded as a member of a company that includes Socrates, Mahavira, Buddha, Christ, Kabir, Tolstoy and other prophets. He was a wise man and may be said to have heralded the dawn of a spiritual epoch in human history.<sup>11</sup>

10 John H. Holmes, a devoted and leading Christian admirer, thus writes of Gandhi: ".....the immortal and omnipotent conqueror, for he possesses the hearts of men for ever, and as long as there is a human race upon this planet, will be remembered and revered. (Gandhi Memorial Peace Number, *The Visvabharati Quarterly*, 1949, p. 244).

11 Ernest Barker, "Gandhi as Bridge and Reconciler", in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 60, says that Gandhi was the St. Francis and the St. Thomas mixed with the man of practical affairs and legal training.

## 3

### PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF GANDHI'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

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#### 1. The Religious Evolution of Gandhi : Religious Metaphysics

Gandhi was an exponent of religious metaphysics. He was deeply devoted to religion in the sense of self-realization through a moral life and service of the people. But in his life there is not that deep, all-absorbing quest for *nirvikalpa samadhi* which we find in Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Ramatirtha. For him, as he constantly said, there is no emancipation apart from service.

The religious evolution of Gandhi can be studied in four phases. Being a Vaishnava by birth he did imbibe the sanctity of *Ramanama* from his family background. The recitation of the *Rama Raksha*, the listening to the reading of Tulsidasa's *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavata* and the stories of Shravana and Harishchandra inculcated in him a deep conviction in the supremacy of truth as the essence of all morality.

In England, he became acquainted with important religious books. He eagerly read Edwin Arnold's *The Song Celestial* and *The Light of Asia*. He met Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Annie Besant, the two towering spokesmen of Theosophy. His study of Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy* stimulated in him the desire to make deeper studies of Hinduism. He read some early chapters of the *Old Testament* like *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus* and portions of *Numbers* without being impressed. But the *New Testament* deeply gripped him. He also read the chapter on Muhammad the prophet of Islam in Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship*.<sup>1</sup>

In South Africa, Gandhi underwent a further religious training. His Christian friends wanted to persuade him of the uniqueness and perfection of Jesus Christ. With his critical sense, Gandhi could not accept that position. Neither did he ascribe greater divinity to the Vedic revelation than to the Christian or Islamic. His contacts with Moslem friends induced him to study Islam and he read Sale's translation of the Koran. He read Washington Irving's *Life of Mohomet*

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1 On page 49, of the *Autobiography*, Gandhi says that he read the chapter on the prophet of Islam in Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship* in England. On page 115, of the *Autobiography*, he says that he read "Carlyle's panegyric on the Prophet" in South Africa.

*and His Successors.* He also read *The Sayings of Zarathustra*. Thus, while in India, Gandhi had studied only some of the Hindu scriptures, and while in England he had read also about Theosophy and Christianity, besides the works of Edwin Arnold, in South Africa, with his studies of Islam and Zoroastrianism, he emerged as a full-fledged student of comparative religions. Just as in England he had been deeply moved by *The Song Celestial*, *The Light of Asia* and the New Testament, so in the early part of his stay in South Africa he received tremendous mental and emotional comfort from the study of Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* and *The Gospel in Brief*. He also carried on correspondence with the great teacher Raichandbhai (1867-1901), whom he had met in 1891. Raichand tried to impress upon Gandhi the subtlety and profundity of Hindu teachings.

The studies of comparative religions intensified Gandhi's self-introspection. After Gandhi took his second trip to South Africa in December 1902, his religious introspectiveness deepened. He read Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*, M. N. Dvivedi's *Raja Yoga* and the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. He also took to some Yogic practices. From now on, he undertook a more serious study of the *Bhagavadgita* and soon it became his spiritual dictionary and ideal mother.

Thus we can point out four phases in Gandhi's religious evolution and to each one of them we can ascribe a term borrowed from his *Autobiography*<sup>2</sup>:

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|--|-----------------|
| (1) Phase of "Glimpses" :  | 1. C1875—1888   |
| (2) Phase of "Acquaintance" :<br>With Hinduism, Theosophy and<br>Christianity                              | 2. 1888—1891    |
| (3a) Phase of "Ferment" :<br>and   | 3. 1893—1896    |
| (3b) Phase of Comparative "Study" of<br>religions like Hinduism, Christianity,<br>Islam and Zoroastrianism |                 |
| (4) Phase of "Introspection" :   | 4. 1903 onwards |

## 2. Metaphysical Idealism

(a) *Metaphysics and Political Theory.* A study of metaphysics is important not only for the reason that it affords rational insights into the problems of the origin and nature of the cosmos and the value and final destiny of man but also because it vitally determines the basic framework of our social and political thought. Metaphysical assumptions, either explicitly stated or implicitly presumed, are at the

2 In the *Autobiography* the titles of Chapters are :

Part I, Chap. X	: "Glimpses of Religion".
Part I, Chap. XX	"Acquaintance With Religions".
Part II, Chap. XV	"Religious Ferment".
Part II, Chap. XVII	"Comparative Study of Religions".
Part IV, Chap. V	"Result of Introspection". (Our Italics)

base of our social and political propositions and hence we find that there are radical differences between the political conclusions of materialists like Hobbes and Marx and idealists like Gandhi and Plato. The deep and profound devotion of Gandhi to God and to the moral code (Mahavratas) left its indelible impress on his political ideas and technics. As a theist, for example, he was a humanitarian and would refuse to take advantage of the weaknesses of his opponents and willingly give up his hard-won political victories if that would satisfy the minority.

The fundamental notion of Gandhism is the metaphysical conception of an omnipresent<sup>3</sup> spiritual reality, "an all-embracing Living Light" which can be called Sachchidananda or Brahman or Rama<sup>4</sup> or simply Truth. This supreme Absolute is both the starting-point and the final goal of Gandhian thought. Gandhi always repeated the saying of the Gita that God was Avyakta or the unmanifest indeterminate and extended beyond the world but he was also immanent in the cosmos. Salvation or the realization of Truth was the true vocation of man and hence the supreme theme in Gandhi, notwithstanding his, at times seemingly complete, absorption in social and political action, was, always, self-realization or the realization of God.

(b) *God as Truth.* God, to Gandhi, is a "self-existent all-knowing Living Force which inheres every other force known to the world." God is even more intangible than other.<sup>5</sup> He is both immanent and transcendent. Gandhi wrote :

"I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever-changing and ever-dying, there is underlying all that change, a living Power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves, and recreates. That informing Power and Spirit is God. And since nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is. And is this power benevolent or malevolent. I see it as purely benevolent, for I can see that, in the midst of death, life persists; in the midst of untruth, truth persists; in the

M. K. Gandhi, *To Hindus and Muslims* : "God is certainly one. He has no second. He is unfathomable, unknowable and unknown to the vast majority of mankind. He is everywhere. He sees without eyes and hears without ears. He is formless and indivisible. He is uncreate, has no father, mother or child ; and yet he allows himself to be worshipped as father, mother or child....He is the most delusive. He is the nearest to us if we would but know the fact. But is farthest from us if we do not want to realize His omnipresence."

M. K. Gandhi, "Temple Worship", *Harijan*, March 18, -933 : "Though my reason and heart long ago realized the highest attribute and name of God as Truth, I recognize truth by the name of Rama."

Mahatma Gandhi, *Ramanama* (Karachi, 1947), p. 76.

midst of darkness, light persists. Hence I gather that God is life, truth, and light.”<sup>6</sup>

Like the ancient Vedanta, Gandhi accepts Sachchidananda as the highest conceptual formulation of reality<sup>7</sup> or Parabrahman.<sup>8</sup> Sat is the supreme essence and the primordial being. Gandhi conceived of Sat or Truth not only as an ethical category but as an ontological being of the highest realm.<sup>9</sup> Truth is not merely a theoretical value or intrinsic moral ideal but is the highest reality. Gandhi had immense, deep and constant faith in God as Truth<sup>10</sup> and, in conversations with Romain Rolland in 1931, told him that since 1929 he had begun saying Truth is God instead of the earlier formulation that God is Truth because the former would not exclude even the views of atheists since they also adhere to truth. In the last chapter of his *Autobiography* entitled “Farewell”, he refers to the supreme effulgent Truth which is a million times more lustrous than the physical sun. This imagery is in the Vedic and the Upanishadic tradition regarding Pushan, Savita or Surya. While Plato in the *Republic* says God is true, in his later statements, Gandhi always maintained that Truth is God. Like Kant, Gandhi also said that the starry heavens were a revelation of divine majesty. God as truth is also the eternally perfect infinite consciousness. Thus Truth, according to Gandhi, is not only the supreme existence but is also the Chit or the highest gnosis and consciousness because there can be no knowledge apart from truth. Like Plato, Gandhi regarded God as the supreme good.<sup>11</sup>

Gandhi inherited the strong faith in the existence of a deep spiritual Existent from his family background, specially from his devout mother, Srimati Putlibai (1841-1891). He came from a staunch Vaishnava family and the austerity and rigorous self-control that we find in his character are to be traced to his family background. His philosophy and political action are incomprehensible unless interpreted in the context of the supreme and abiding influence upon him of the moral norms of Vaishnavite Hinduism received by him during his childhood and adult years. Born in Gujarat, the land of Vaishnavism and Jainism, he had been influenced by several Gujarati teachers and authors like Narasimha Mehta and Narmadashankar (1833-1886), the author of *Dharma Vichara* (1855).<sup>12</sup> Perhaps his most famous religious song was the one by Narasimha Mehta

<sup>6</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, pp. 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> M. K. Gandhi, “Truth”, *From Yeravda Mandir* (Ashrama Observances) pp. 1-4.

<sup>8</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma*, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, p. 38 : “Truth is not a mere attribute of God, but He is That.”

<sup>10</sup> M. K. Gandhi, “Truth and God”, *Hindu Dharma*, pp. 66-68.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> Gandhi was influenced by the preface of this book.

describing the attributes of a true Vaishnava.<sup>13</sup> This song inspired even Gandhi's attachment to Satyagraha. The *Ramayana* of Tulsidas also cast a profound and lasting influence on the young Gandhi.<sup>14</sup> At thirteen he was "enraptured" by the reading of the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas by Ladha Maharaj of Bileshwara to his (Gandhi's) ailing father.<sup>15</sup> So intense was his transparent loyalty to the teachings of purity, honesty and chastity inculcated in Vaishnavism that he refused to yield to several temptations that came his way during the early years of his life in England and South Africa. The writings of Tolstoy, the studies of the *Gita*<sup>16</sup> and his contacts with Raichandbhai,<sup>17</sup> had also strengthened and deepened his religious convictions.<sup>18</sup>

13 Narasimha Mehta (1414-1480 or 1500-1580 A.D.) is a prominent devotee-poet of Gujarat. His famous song is noted below in English translation :

"He is the true Vaishnava who knows and feels another's woes as his own. Ever ready to serve, he never boasts.

He bows to every one, and despises no one, keeping his thought, word and deed pure.

Blessed is the mother of such a one.

He looks upon all with an equal eye. He has got rid of his lust. He reveres every woman as his mother. His tongue would fail him if he attempted to utter an untruth. He covets not another's wealth. The bonds of earthly attachment hold him not. His mind is deeply rooted in detachment (renunciation). Every moment his intent is on reciting the name of Rama (God). All the holy places are ever present in his body.

He has conquered greed, hypocrisy, passion and anger. A sight of such a Vaishnava, says Narasimha, saves a family through seventy-one generations."

For a different rendering, see *Gandhi Memorial Peace Number*, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

14 See Gandhi's *Autobiography*, pp. 23-24.

15 *Ibid.*

16 It may appear a little strange that Gandhi, one of the greatest exponents of the philosophy of the *Gita*, should receive his initiation into this scripture in 1888-89, through a translation of this book by an English writer, Edwin Arnold.

17 Although Gandhi did not accept Raichandbhai (1867-1901) as his Guru or spiritual preceptor, he had been enormously influenced by the latter's intellectual, moral and spiritual attainments and he (Raichandbhai) became a refuge to him (Gandhi) in moments of spiritual crises. Raichand's father Ravajibhai was a Vaishnava and his mother Devabai was a Jain but he (Raichand) himself was a great Jain teacher. Gandhi met him during the early months after his return from England. In South Africa, when he was passing through a religious ferment, he received consolation and guidance from him. Raichand sent to Gandhi the following books: (i) *Panchikarana*, (ii) *Maniratnamala*, (iii) *Mumukshu Prakarana* of the Yogavasistha and (iv) *Sadarsana Samuchchaya* by Haribhadra. It was he who provided strong inspiration to Gandhi for the practice of Brahmacharya.

18 Gandhi, in the chapter entitled "Quickened Spirit of Sacrifice", in his *Autobiography*, gives credit to the Christians and Theosophists for having reinforced and strengthened his religious convictions. Gandhi, however, had never experienced any serious torment or anguish born of lack of faith. He was not impressed with the religious teachings of the *Manusmriti* but was, on the contrary, made somewhat inclined "towards atheism" by its cosmogony (p. 25, *Autobiography*).

(e) *Abstract Monism and Concrete Personality.* Gandhi was a metaphysical idealist<sup>19</sup> but not exactly of the Samkarite school. His views are more akin to those of the theistic interpreters of the Vedanta like Ramanuja<sup>20</sup> and Madhva. He regarded God as the indweller (Antaryamin), the all-powerful (Parameshwara) and the omniscient. He did not reject the cosmos as Maya or indescribable illusion but felt that the absolute majesty of God is expressed in the realm of cosmic phenomena. He did adhere to the concept of an undifferentiated, indeterminate, abstract Absolute and said that God or Truth is Law,<sup>21</sup> but he also simultaneously believed in a God who is kind and responsive to the prayers of the devotee.<sup>22</sup> Sometimes he conceived of the ultimate reality as an immutable, impersonal, supra-cosmic and cosmic substance or Law but at other times also spoke of God as a personal subject<sup>23</sup> and supreme being who could be adored and who could respond to the supplications and confessions of the devotee. Although he regarded God as above all attributes, indescribable, and immeasurable, he still claimed that Ramanama<sup>24</sup> was his infallible remedy and the staff of his life. In spite of his belief in the impersonal supremacy of an inexorable supra-cosmic and cosmic Law, Gandhi believed that merciful, divine intervention in favour of the dedicated soul, for the protection of virtue, was possible. He believed in the story of the divine protection offered to Prahlad. He also believed in the story of the elephant and the alligator—Gajendra Moksha—as given in the Bhagavata Purana (VIII/3).<sup>25</sup> It is a story of divine condescension to a crying devotee. It would, thus, appear that Gandhi is trying to reconcile slightly variant points of view. Throughout Gandhi's writings there is the simultaneous advocacy of the two conceptions of God. He adheres to the impersonal notion of God as Law, or the eternal primordial Law or the Law of Truth and Love. But at the same time he is not

19 Gandhi's statement that the soul is omnipresent (*Hindu Dharma*, p. 255), indicates his idealism.

20 For Gandhi's reference to Ramanuja, *Hindu Dharma*, p. 63.

21 In an article entitled "In God's Good Hands", in the *Harijan*, December 9, 1939, Gandhi stated : "Nothing can happen but by His will expressed in His eternal, changeless Law which is He. We neither know Him nor His Law save through the glass darkly. But the faint glimpse of the Law is sufficient to fill me with joy, hope, and faith in the future." Also M. K. Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma*, p. 70. M. K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, p. 357, also refers to God's "Unchangeable Law of Karma".

22 M. K. Gandhi, "Is God a Person or a Force?" *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, pp. 18-19.

23 M. K. Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma*, p. 61, Contrast, p. 69: "God is not a person."

24 Rambha, a family maid-servant, had instilled in the young Gandhi, faith in the repetition of Ramanama as a remedy for his fear of ghosts and spirits. Since his early childhood, Gandhi, thus, got an initiation into the sacred Mantra Ramanama.

25 M. K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, pp. 45, 47. Gandhi had a deep regard for the *Bhagavata Purana*. See p. 24 of his *Autobiography*.

tired of confessing his belief in what amounts to a personal God. He used the Tulsimala, could see in tossing at critical situation the sign of divine will and declared : "He has been my unfailing guide and has sustained me throughout my stormy life." He would, nevertheless, like to stress the identity of God with a firm, fixed, immutable natural order and necessity. He held that God is both the law and the law-giver but is not the blind law.<sup>26</sup> But he is not completely emancipated from the religious traditions of Hinduism. He said that he did not believe in miracles because they interfered with the universal law of causation but his heart yearned for the assurance that at critical hours of predicament, God does rush to the rescue of his devotees.<sup>27</sup> Certainly, as a man of critical intelligence, he would not accept the mighty feats of endeavour ascribed to the incarnations of God in the Hindu scriptures.

(d) *Faith and Purity : Beyond Rationalist Epistemology.* Truth as an ontological Absolute is not the Personal God of the theistic religions.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, as a great Vaishnava devotee, Gandhi always offered prayers to God every morning and evening. He regularly prayed even during the committee meetings of the Round Table Conference in London, in 1931. Besides prayer, Gandhi stressed dedicated humanitarian service and self-contemplation as the methods for the realization of God. The greatest emphasis, however, is on an immaculate purity of personal life. Truth as the highest self-subsistent infinite objective Being is to be realized by a thoroughly pure and holy living. Only through the sincere pursuit of a pure disciplined life can God be subjectively perceived and intuitively felt in the inner depths of one's experience.

Truth, according to Gandhi, is to be realized only by spiritual experience obtained through a disciplined holy life and not by dialectical skill or abstract conceptual cognition. Proper moral training is essential for God-realization. "Not every person can know God's will." The wickedness of the pharisaical human heart is the greatest barrier to God-realization.<sup>29</sup> However, if man sincerely started the journey on the path of moral purification the vision of God would begin to dawn slowly on him. Gandhi, thus, differs from the philosophical absolutists of the West, in not stressing theoretic cognition or conceptual dialectical *neosis* as the way to the realization of the divine being. A rationalism, claiming to be the sole and omnipotent passport to the knowledge of God, was condemned by Gandhi as "a

26 *Hindu Dharma*, p. 64.

27 He said about himself: "I cannot recall a single instance when, at the eleventh hour, He (God) has forsaken me."

28 G. D. H. Cole, "Tribute to Gandhi", in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *M. Gandhi*, 2nd ed., p. 375, says that Gandhi's truth is "subjective as well as objective, to be lived personally, and unattainable except by being so lived."

29 M. K. Gandhi, "God Is", *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, pp. 4-7 (*Young India*, October 11, 1928).

hideous monster.”<sup>30</sup> He said that even Samkara had attributed primacy to “faith and prayer.”<sup>31</sup> He accepted the limitations of rationalism both as a theory of knowledge and as a guide to human conduct and hence he did not concern himself with the rational demonstration of the cosmological or ontological or teleological proofs of the existence of God. He relied on faith and personal experience and said : “humble and mute acceptance of divine authority make life easier.”<sup>32</sup> “Reason is a poor thing in the midst of temptations. . .Faith that transcends reason is our only Rock of Ages.”<sup>33</sup> Thus Gandhi is opposed to rationalism both on epistemological and moral grounds. Epistemologically, he holds that the ultimate reality can be known only through intuition and faith. At the moral level, he holds that faith in God alone is the guarantee for the purity of one’s character. He conceded, however, that the problem of the reality of God could be reasoned out to a limited extent. But faith, won through personal experience, was the only ultimate refuge. Like the Vaishnavas, thus, he stressed faith and devotion. No worthy action for human good is possible, according to him, without belief in and sincere acceptance of the spirit as Truth.<sup>34</sup>

Absolute Truth can be realized by super-rational intuition which dawns on a person as a consequence of moral living expressed through prolonged faithful service of God. Gandhi stressed that by holy personal life one could feel and have immediate experience of God. He, thus, emphasized the Vedic and Upanishadic concept of Shraddha. Shraddha or devout faith results in the incorporation, by the human soul, of the power of the supreme spirit into itself. It transcends mere intellectual adherence, and in its highest form it leads to divine communion. It does presuppose unreserved surrender and complete consecration of human life to the divine master. Gandhi yearned for that deep and intense faith in God which is “as immovable as the Himalayas and as white as the snows on their peaks.”<sup>35</sup> To him Shraddha was a dynamic force especially when it is conceived as inseparable from the principle of cosmic love which Gandhi interprets Ahimsa to be. Thus the view of Spinoza in his *Theologico-Political Tractatus*, that the sphere of reason is truth and wisdom and the sphere of theology is piety and obedience, would not be acceptable to Gandhi.

Experience is the starting-point of almost every philosophy and

30 M. K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, p. 182.

31 *Ibid.*

32 “Before the throne of the Almighty, man will be judged not by his acts but by his intentions. For God alone reads our hearts.” (Gandhi)

33 M. K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, p. 141.

34 According to Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol. I, pp. 199-200, faith in the omnipresence of God is essential for the non-violent man because it provides courage and also strengthens respect for the lives of opponents.

35 Gandhi accepted the teaching of the Bhagavadgita that Shraddha leads to knowledge (*Shraddhavan labhate jnanam*).

Gandhi's spiritual idealism was based on personal experience. He claimed that the more disciplined he became, the more did he approximate to the realization of truth. He said : "The whole of God's law is embodied in a pure life." There is, consequently, a note of radical spiritual individualism in Gandhian thought because stress has been laid on the sanctity of personal experience of truth. Many mystics and religious teachers of humanity have also testified to the inward intuitive experience of the eternal Absolute Existence.<sup>36</sup> The depths of religious experience as vouched by the great teachers are more authentic than formalistic logic or rationalistic metaphysics.<sup>37</sup> Gandhi, hence, recognized the limitations of reason and he believed in the authenticity of infallible personal spiritual realization. He would not have accepted Hegel's ridiculous treatment of mystics as simple souls. He had reverence for the testimony of the incarnations and prophets. He wrote :

"There is an indefinable, mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it though I do not see it.<sup>38</sup> It is this unseen power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses. But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extend. . .It is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within. Such testimony is to be found in the experiences of an unbroken line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes. To reject this evidence is to deny oneself."<sup>39</sup>

Since God is invisible, hence, the only way to know about God is to understand the lives of the God-seekers and the mystics and the devotees. Gandhi's faith in the reality and providence of God was, he claimed, substantiated by the experience of several mystic teachers.

Gandhi, however, also claimed to be a true "scientist" in the sense that he constantly experimented with truth and tried to make his propositions sounder by repeated observations, and personal and group experimentations. But this scientific and rational process of enquiry was only applicable to the world of social and political existence or other temporal sectors and dimensions. Gandhi's own

36 M. K. Gandhi *Hindu Dharma*, p. 65.

37 *Harjan*, May 16, 1938 : "It can never be a matter for argument. If you would have me convince others by argument, I am floored. But I can tell you this—that I am surer of His existence than of the fact that you and I are sitting in this room. I can also testify that I may live without air and water but not without Him. You may pluck out my eyes, but that will not kill me. You may chop off my nose, but that will not kill me. But blast my belief in God and I am dead.."

38 Gandhi once said : "I tell you, if all the world denied God, I should be His sole witness. It is a continual miracle to me."—quoted in M. Lester, *Gandhi : World Citizen*, p. 28.

39 M. K. Gandhi, "God is", *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, pp. 5-6.

faith in a fundamental ultimate spiritual truth was born not out of arguments and external observations but of spiritual apprehension and intuition which dawns on a man as a result of purity of life. Hermann Cohen, Croce, Gentile, Bradley, Bosanquet and others have tried in recent times to substantiate metaphysical idealism on the grounds of reason. But Gandhi accepted the fundamental truth of spiritual idealism on the basis of faith and experience and only to a small extent on the basis of reason. He said in a speech at Colombo :

"I claim to be a man of faith and prayer, and even if I were to be cut to pieces, I trust God would give me the strength not to deny Him, but to assert that He is. The Mussalman says, 'He is, and there is no one else.' The Christian says the same thing, and so does the Hindu. If I may venture to say so, the Buddhist also says the same thing, only in different words. It is true that we may each of us be putting our own interpretation on the word 'God'. We must of necessity do so : for God embraces, not only this tiny globe of ours, but millions and billions of such globes and worlds beyond worlds. How can we, little crawling creatures, possibly measure His greatness, His boundless love, His infinite compassion ? So great is His infinite love and pity that He allows man insolently to deny Him, to wrangle about Him, and even to cut the throat of his fellow-man"!

Like a humble seeker, Gandhi claimed to have stressed only the fragmentary aspects of the vast infinite immeasurable Truth. In a sense, he may be regarded, as he claimed to be, an Anekantavadi and Syadvadi.<sup>40</sup> His adherence to the conception of reality as many-sided, only some of whose phases and aspects can be known by the human mind, is in much marked contrast to the dogmatic assertions of the Hegelian rational intellectualism which claimed to have known the whole truth.

(e) *Prayer : Technic of Divine Realization.* Gandhi said that he could live without food but not without prayer. Prayer is the expression of the longing of the soul and a response to the yearning of the heart.<sup>41</sup> Life would be dull and vacant without prayer, which is a daily homage to the supreme spirit and the demonstration of Shraddha. It is the technic of sharing in the boundless compassion of God. It is, at the ethical level, a call to humility based on the consciousness of one's imperfections judged from the standard of eternal truth and complete non-violence.

<sup>40</sup> M. K. Gandhi, "Three Vital Questions", *Young India*, January 21, 1926, p. 30, says that although an advaitist he would also be called an Anekantavadi and Syadvadi because he thought that the world was both real (in its essence) and unreal (in its changes). He also says that by experience he was learning to see himself as others see him and thus is appreciating the concept of "maniness of reality." He, however, makes it clear that his conceptions of Anekantavada and Syadvada are his own and not of the scholastic dialecticians.

<sup>41</sup> M. K. Gandhi, "A Discourse on Prayer", *Hindu Dharma*, pp. 122-25.

Prayer is also the first and last lesson in learning the art of deliberate self-abnegation to vindicate the honour and liberty of the nation and humanity. It is not the monopoly of old women but is the most potent instrument of action. It is a preparation for sharing in the sufferings of the nation and mankind. Gandhi introduced congregational prayer in the Phoenix Settlement and the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa for imparting training to the Indian residents in the practice of Satyagraha. Prayer as the homage to God for the strengthening of the conscious determination to share in the sufferings of mankind indicated that Gandhi accepted a universalistic organic community of humanity as a whole—*universitas hominum*. He would be, thus, by implication, opposed to interpreting interpersonal relations merely in the formal and juridical terms of economic contract and the dynamics of self-interest.

(f) *Service to Man (Seva) : Karmayoga.* Gandhi accepted man's spiritual relationship to the universe. The notion of service to one's kind is a deduction from the conception of supreme Truth and eternal consciousness. For the realization of God as the supreme unity it was essential to realize unity with all the creatures of the world. Hence by means of deep faith and prayer, he prepared himself to realize God in the hearts of the dumb millions and went to the extent of saying: "I recognize no God except the God that is to be focussed in the hearts of the dumb millions. They do not recognize His presence; I do."<sup>42</sup> He does believe that if God and Truth are identical and if all existence is merely the manifestation of one Truth or Sat, there can be no question of a separate emancipation or isolated salvation. The concept of collective liberation should follow from the philosophy of the absolute oneness of God (Advaita). Hence humanitarian service is imperative for the aspirant after unity with the divine being and is integrally connected with the conception of the all-pervasiveness and unity of the supreme spirit. Thus, because Gandhi wanted to be a Jivanmukta, his constant aim was the realization of God through service of mankind.

Spirituality does never imply a pharisaical satisfaction with unfounded dogmas, cant and superstitions or a contentment with false gods and fetishes. It means a quest for eternal values and religious self-consciousness. Its consummation results in the full awareness of the power of the creative soul and the divine super-soul. It also means the incorporation of the powers of the soul in the operative mechanism of social and political collectivities. The spiritual man, hence, cannot be blind to the sufferings of humanity. There has to be a constant interdependence between the operations of the moral laws in personal lives and in group activities. Thus the comprehensive conception of spirituality emphasizes the ideal of a progressive and purposive evolution of humanity as a whole. The work of individual salvation,

therefore, has to go hand in hand with the work of collective emancipation. Efforts, hence, have to be made for the enhancement of the good of all (Sarvabhutahita). The world, in its essence and true basis, is not a mere physico-chemical aggregation but is the creation of the divine spirit. All the inhabitants of the world, irrespective of race, denomination, caste and sex are manifestations of God. Loyalty to this divine spirit implies that strenuous efforts have to be made for the growth of the sentiments of love, service, suffering and mutuality. The true sign of developed spirituality is the readiness to lay down one's life for the good of others. Hence Gandhi never became a recluse retiring from the world and rejecting its claims and demands. He said that he could realize the divine reality only through devoted and constant service to mankind.<sup>43</sup> The primordial spiritual essence of God is to be realized not alone by abstract contemplation in a cave or cloister, but by serving and helping the fallen and dejected sections of humanity. Hence in Gandhi's life one finds a genuine sympathy for the suppressed and the humiliated and he sincerely wanted to restore the rights of the disinherited and the forlorn. He had no Platonic or Aristotelian disdain for the manual workers. He said : "...I know that God is found more often in the lowliest;" ; hence identification with the downtrodden sections of humanity through service was essential. Service for Gandhi meant "complete merging of oneself in, and identification with the limitless ocean of life." Gandhi, therefore, tried to attain God-realization by disinterested service to mankind through political and socially constructive activities. This sanctification of social and political service as the pathway to God, really, also constitutes a contribution to contemporary civilization and thought because thus he stressed the notion of genuine heart-unity in place of the formal and mechanical concept of "solidarity" of modern times which has failed to unify peoples. He wanted to perfect the technic of "melting" the hearts of even the modern editions of Neroes for the good of the exploited sections in colonial countries. According to Gandhi, every act of sincere fraternization and genuine identification with the members of the suppressed and poor communities and sects has a super-individual and a spiritual contribution to make. It is not merely philanthropic but it uplifts the social worker. Hence in a spiritual universe all should attempt to share in the misfortunes and tragedies of our neighbours. The services rendered to a poor untouchable or a forlorn refugee or a sick individual, however, are not only acts of socially-oriented piety but represent solid advances in the path of the conscious comprehension of God as all-pervasive Truth. Hence Gandhi, like Vivekananda, became the prophet of God as "Daridra Narayan". He did never accept that human suffering and tragedy could be dismissed as being unreal<sup>44</sup> or

<sup>43</sup> M. K. Gandhi, "My Mission", *Hindu Dharma*, p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> M. K. Gandhi, "Is the World Real or Unreal", *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, p. 338.

illusory (Maya) as has been sometimes stated by several of the arrogant Vedantic priests of an indeterminate absolute Brahman. Unlike some of the Buddhist subjectivists and idealists, he prescribed not only psychological and philosophical remedies for the eradication of human misery and pain but actively engaged himself in social, political and humanitarian service.

Albert Schweitzer and several other Christian interpreters of Gandhian thought consider the emphasis on social service to be indicative of Christian influence on Gandhi. Service to man, however, is not alien to Indian thought. Asoka was certainly a humanitarian. Gandhi, in his emphasis on service to living beings resulting in God-realization (Moksha),<sup>45</sup> attempts to give a modern realistic version of the old Mahayana concept of Mahakaruna. He is also attempting, in a sense, to concretize at social and political levels the ideals of the Bodhisattva. His ideal, thus, is an extension of that of Maitreya. He is not content with only the abstract form of a pure and good will but he wants to fill that moral will with the concrete contents of humanitarian duties and altruistic virtues.

Gandhi's sincere devotion to the social and moral well-being of mankind amounts to a repudiation of the Benthamite identification of the good with the useful or the Hobbesian identification of the legal with the just. Only that is truly good and just which enhances the personality of the meek, the poor and the suppressed. Hence a super-legal criterion of justice has to be sought and that is the development of the fullest potentialities of all human beings through disinterested service. Hence he wrote : "I do not believe that an individual may gain spiritually and those who surround him suffer. I believe in *advaita*, I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all that lives." In Gandhism, spiritual realization and social service are integrally connected. Although the concept of Ahimsa is inculcated in the Upanishads, the Yoga philosophy and the Gita, still Jainism, Buddhism and Vaishnavism have put enormous stress on it. According to Gandhi, God-realization is not possible without the sense of dynamic identification with the poorest and the humblest of creatures. This is the essence of Ahimsa or positive love. We find, thus, synthesis of the Vedantic spiritual metaphysics and the Jaina-Buddhistic-Vaishnava ethics of good of all living beings, in Gandhism.

Gandhi claimed to be the humble servant of man and God who felt that it was essential to engage in social duties if one wanted to serve God. He referred to the noble example of Abu Ben Adhem of Leigh Hunt's poem.<sup>46</sup> In the Gandhian philosophy, genuine service of one's kind has been regarded as a hallowed path of saintliness and godliness. Service or Seva is certainly one of the key words in the

45 For Gandhi's reference to Mukti, *Hindu Dharma*, p. 415.

46 M. K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, p. 172.

philosophy of Gandhi. The noble side of human nature cannot be expressed without the performance of duties for the good of the neighbourhood and the society. This is the inner meaning of Swadeshi, according to Gandhi.

Furthermore, there is no antithesis between genuine social service and the growth of moral individuality. Gandhi's individualism or the affirmation of the claims of conscience arises out of a religious perception of things. Hence his individualism is not egoism but proceeds from a recognition of the extension of the dimensions of the human spirit through service. He does not stress, however, the mere performance of rational socially-conforming duties. Neither would he be prepared to accept complete liberty in the choice of vocations. His ideal is that a devotee of God would serve others through whatever work *naturally* (*Svabhavanyata*) comes his way.<sup>47</sup> Thus his notion of duty as service is different from that of some of the exponents of German idealism and subjectivism who stress moral voluntarism and a determination of one's action by the guidance solely of the rational faculty.

(g) *Karma and Rebirth : Freedom and Determinism.* As a Hindu, Gandhi accepted the truth conveyed by the concepts of Karma and reincarnation.<sup>48</sup> Karma stresses constant activization of moral energy by all individuals for the attainment of perfection. It is, hence, opposed to the notions of salvation by faith and of predestination of a few 'elect' souls as conceived by John Calvin. In his letters to Leo Tolstoy, Gandhi had asserted his faith in the genuineness of the theory of the reincarnation of the soul while, as a Christian, Tolstoy only adhered to the possibility of the immortality of the soul but did not accept rebirth.<sup>49</sup> Gandhi believed in the evolution of moral consciousness in man through successive births and in the accumulation of moral and spiritual merit (*Punya*) and like a religious devotee accepted that "death after a life truly lived is but a prelude to a better and richer life." A God-fearing life, hence, according to him, would be the greatest conquest of man because it robbed death of its sting and the grave of its victory at the end of the journey of life.

As an individualist, Gandhi teaches complete concern with the performance of one's own duties (*Svadharma*) and is opposed, like Plato in the *Republic*, to meddling with the vocations of others. He supports this conception of individualism by the Hindu theological idea of reincarnation. The theory of reincarnation implies the slow moral and spiritual evolution of the human personality through the neutralization of evil and the accumulation of good *Samskara*. He was absolutely certain of the truth of rebirth<sup>50</sup> and regarded transmi-

<sup>47</sup> *Bhagavadgita*, XVIII, 17.

<sup>48</sup> Transmigration is a consequence of the doctrine of the oneness of all that lives.—M. K. Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma*, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Kalidasa Nag, *Tolstoy and Gandhi*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>50</sup> M. K. Gandhi, "On Rebirth", *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, p. 377.

gration as an inexorable law of nature comparable to the law of the rising of the sun. Hence he believed that even a little of meritorious karma performed would be conserved and yield fruit.<sup>51</sup> In his letter to Tolstoy, he says that the philosophy of reincarnation had been a great consolation to the Satyagrahi fighters in South Africa.

(h) *Truth, Art and Aesthetics.* Gandhi's loyalty to truth as an ethical norm was absolute and uncompromising, because Truth is the supreme reality. There is, however, no corresponding or parallel conception of an absolute eternal beauty in Gandhi's thought as in Plato's *Symposium*. Truth is, for Gandhi, more important than beauty. Hence the aesthetic criterion is subordinate to the quest for the true, the holy, the pure. "Truth is the first thing to be sought for and Beauty and Goodness will then be added unto you." There can be no genuine art bereft of truth. He would consider Socrates as beautiful, although from a superficially aesthetic standpoint, the latter's external form was not pleasing. Gandhi regarded Jesus Christ as a supreme artist because he expressed truth. As a philosopher of culture, Gandhi considers truth to be the criterion of art and aesthetics. Like Tolstoy,<sup>52</sup> Gandhi also had a moral approach to art. He upholds the realization of the moral values in the lives of individuals to be the genuine criterion of progress and hence he said : "True art is thus an expression of the soul." He was conscious that in sophisticated circles he was regarded as a puritan with a feeble appreciation of art and he himself once said : "I know I have earned notoriety as a philistine in art." But Gandhi did appreciate proportion and harmony which are the essence of art. In his personal life also there was a planning, a symmetry and a balance. He was constantly moulding himself and others according to a pre-established ideal like a moral sculptor. But it has still to be acknowledged that Gandhi was a puritan. He would refuse to appreciate any art unless it depicted either a divine theme or could be of some use in serving the masses. He thus wanted the beautiful to be an element of the holy.

(i) *Political Implications of Truth.* According to Gandhi, the supreme values are love and truth. An exaltation of the canon of utility as propounded by the Philosophical Radicals or of the Hobbesian canon of the identification of justice with the dictates of the political sovereign would be unacceptable to him. Justice, according to Gandhi, should be rooted in truth. Truth is absolute and any compromise with it is unpalatable to him. He said : "Not even for the freedom of India would I resort to an untruth." Even Krishna is stated to have made some compromise with truth for the sake of the victory of the Pandavas. Plato also prescribes 'remedial lies' in his *Republic*, to be resorted to on certain occasions by the

51 M. K. Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma*, p. 55, says that Max Muller has stated that it was dawning on Europe that transmigration is not a theory but a fact.

52 L. Tolstoy, "Shakespeare and the Drama" (1906).

ruling guardians. Gandhi goes far beyond Plato in his attachment to truth. In a sense, Plato, with his theory that the rulers could, on certain occasions, take recourse to "remedial lies", partly initiates the philosophy of "Reason of State" which was later on carried to perverse exaggerations by the champions of state absolutism. But Gandhism is founded upon the principle that resort to supreme truth is the correct criterion of action both in individual and interpersonal and political activities. In other words, what the inner human conscience cannot justify can also never be justified by invoking superior 'reasons of state'. In defending the national interest also, the statesman has to act in conformity with truth. Cavour of Italy and Lala Lajpat Rai in India openly said that they would be willing to tone down the rigours of ethics for the sake of the emancipation of the country. But Gandhi, the ethical absolutist, refused to make any compromise with truth on grounds of reasons of politics or state. He would at times even embarrass and irritate his political followers by saying that he regarded truth to be a higher category than even Swaraj.

But although devoted to truth, Gandhi never thought of imposing his creed of truth on any one. He was motivated by the democratic spirit of civility and tolerance. Plato also accepted God to be true but in his *Laws* he prescribed the acceptance of his theological creed, by the citizens, at the cost of death. Even Rousseau would favour coercion for the acceptance of the dogmas of Civil Religion, by the citizens. Gandhi, to the contrary, accepted the democratic concept of universal tolerance. Hence his philosophy of democracy based on truth is oriented to the demands of a free, liberal and open society because he did not accept constrained growth by inculcation and imposition of ruling dogmas.

### **3. Gandhi's Philosophy of History**

Gandhi was not an academic philosopher of history in that sense in which we use this term for Herder, Hegel, Schlegel or Meinecke. But if we reconstruct his scattered ideas into a philosophy of history we find that he accepts divine determinism. He wrote: "Nothing can happen but by His Will expressed in His eternal, changeless law which is He." God, to him, signifies an unchanging and living law. The great prophets through their austerities provide to mankind a faint glimpse of that law. Gandhi said that not every person could know God's will. It required great training to attain the spiritual vision through which God's will could be known. As an exponent of the governance of the universe by divine will, he categorically said that he literally believed that not a leaf moves without sanction from the divine, because, in the ultimate sense, God or truth being the final reality and the omniscient being, it was the supreme determinant of the existence and mode of things and the controller of movements of the world. He attributed, perhaps half mystically, the Bihar Earthquake of 1934, to the divine

wrath against the practice of the mighty illegitimate evil and taboo of untouchability. This view based on divine determinism may not appeal to the sceptic, the agnostic,<sup>53</sup> the positivist or the materialist. But Gandhi stuck deeply and sincerely to his faith in the divine governance of the cosmic and the human processes. Hence he felt that as a punishment for moral sins, natural catastrophes like the earthquake could occur.

Carried to its extreme limits, such a divine or theological determinism can lead to the philosophy of Occasionalism. But divine determinism, in Gandhi, applied only to the final explanation of things. It never degenerated into fatalism because he was a strong advocate of the theory of Karmayoga or the strenuous disinterested activism of the Gita. He quoted the saying of the Gita that the human spirit could mould its destiny.<sup>54</sup> In support of the view of the Gita, he also quoted Milton's saying : "The mind is its own place and in itself can make a heaven of hell and hell of heaven."<sup>55</sup> His life, hence, was full of actions, inspired by the artistic vision of a spiritual whole which imparted a meaningful dimension to his diverse actions as a social worker, a journalist, a political leader and a moral prophet. Thus Gandhi combined faith in the supremacy of God with the insistence on constant actions and taught that man is to have unwavering faith in God and is to perform the actions that naturally fall his way (Svakarma). This is the essence of the teachings of the Gita as interpreted by Gandhi.

As a philosopher of history and culture, Gandhi is also a believer in ideational determinism which follows from his belief in divine determinism or the concept of the reign of God in the universe. Because God or Truth is all-pervasive, omnipotent and conscient, hence the great moral ideas of truth and love have the sure chance of ultimate success on the temporal plane. Thus Gandhi's optimism regarding the final victory of moral ideas over evil follows from his deep faith in the beneficence of God. He attributed the discovery of the idea of Ahimsa to the great God-fearing rishis whom he regarded greater geniuses than Newton. He also affirmed the creative and dynamic role of Ahimsa in saving the world-process from submergence by the law of the beasts as shown by the fact that life does persist amidst violence and slaughter.

Gandhi stressed, however, that in order to be historically operative, the great ideas should be suffused with the power of human suffering. He held that there is no limit to the power of Ahimsa to suffer. He repeatedly pointed out that for the successful practice of Ahimsa, it was essential to cultivate the virtues of

53 Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 490, regards Gandhi's opinion as "staggering". Rabindranath Tagore and Narayan Swami of the Arya Samaj also sharply differed from the Mahatma's remark.

54 *Bhagavadgita*, VI, 5-6.

55 *Harijan*, May 12, 1946.

self-abnegation and the fearless embracing of death. He believed in the creative role of spiritual and moral ideas like Ahimsa when they are embodied in the character of sincere souls who are ready even to embrace death for their principles. Human history contains numerous instances of the authentic success of Ahimsa. He, constantly, referred to the transforming power of the ideas of the great religions and the prophets and was thoroughly optimistic of the eventual success of the ideal of Ahimsa in human history.

Gandhi stood as a critic of the political and materialistic conceptions of Occidental philosophers and sociologists who interpret history only in terms of power-politics and economic calculations and who do not adequately recognize the operations of soul-force and Ahimsa in human history. He, on the other hand, advocates a spiritual and moral interpretation of history. To Gandhi, history did not mean only the great political upheavals and socio-economic revolutions or the regimented parades and pageants of the dictators. To him, history was the accumulated record of the activities of mankind as a whole and if history is conceived in this large comprehensive sense, one certainly finds that countless group conflicts and family tensions have been resolved by resort to the moral and spiritual law of Ahimsa. But history as conceived by Western sociologists is "really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul... soul-force being natural is not noted in history." To this kind of materialistic objectivism stressing only the dramatic and cataclysmic aspects characterized by the manifestations of violence, Gandhi was thoroughly opposed.

Since Gandhi absolutely accepted the theory of divine determinism in history, hence, by implication, he would repudiate the analysis of history merely in terms of objective forces, howsoever powerful. Behind all changes, movements and transformations he read the inscrutable hand of a kind Providence and thus upheld the teleological conception of justice because he absolutely believed that in spite of all diremptions, contradictions and antagonisms in history, the ultimate justice of God was sure finally to prevail. In spite of the apparent successes of crude tactics of manipulation, treachery and violence in society and politics, he was adamant in his belief that the superior wisdom of God must result in the triumph of good, in the end. In 1930 at the time of the Salt Satyagraha he said : "God... is guiding his movement. He ever dwells in the hearts of all and He will vouchsafe to us the right guidance if only we have faith in Him." In 1932 also he said that he was undertaking the "Fast unto Death" against the Communal Award at divine dictation. So absolute was his faith in divine determinism that when pistol shots were fired upon his chest, he calmly surrendered himself to God. No curses but the name of God (Hey Rama) was his last utterance.

## 4

# PSYCHOLOGY AND HUMANISM IN GANDHIAN THOUGHT

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### 1. The Concept of Human Nature

According to Gandhi, the real individual (the Atman) is an immortal spiritual entity. Hence man can be said to be a divine spark<sup>1</sup> and the citizen of the moral kingdom of ends and not a mere mechanical and organic aggregation of physical forces and chemical elements. He has a sense of spiritual self-consciousness<sup>2</sup> and moral internality.<sup>3</sup> Being essentially spirit, he can rise superior to evil.

Gandhi accepts that God as Truth is the author only of goodness and never of sin, impurity, evil and falsehood. He affirmed his logical inability to explain the existence of evil. He wrote :

“I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method. To want to do so is to be co-equal with God. I am, therefore, humble enough to recognize evil as such, and I call God long-suffering and patient precisely because He permits evil in the world. I know that He has no evil in Himself and yet if there is evil He is the author of it and yet untouched by it.”

Gandhi, nevertheless, emphasized that evil should be conquered and eradicated. Hence, like Surdas and Tulsidas, Gandhi always prayed to God for the divine mercy which alone could cleanse a man's heart. Although at the cosmic level, evil is inexplicable, at the individual level, it could be traced to one's own actions. Gandhi traces the evil in man to one's own evil Samskaras or past tendencies.<sup>4</sup> There

All persons are children of the same God, “tarred with the same brush”, and “the divine powers within us are infinite.”—M. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, p. 203. Gandhi, *Harijan*, November 17, 1946, wrote : “Given the opportunity, every human being has the same possibility for spiritual growth.”

M. K. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, p. 230, regards purity as an “inherent attribute of the soul.” According to Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol. I, p. 426, man as animal is violent but man as spirit is non-violent. “The moment he awakes to the spirit within, he cannot remain violent. Either he progresses towards Ahimsa or rushes to his doom.”

M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan* (1940): “I am a believer in previous births and rebirths. All our relationships are the result of Samskaras we carry from our previous births. God's laws are inscrutable and are the subject of endless search. No one can fathom them.”

is, however, no all-dominating conception of the inherent sinfulness of human nature in Gandhian thought although the evil, according to Gandhi, is not primarily social but psychological.

Gandhi had deep faith in the goodness of man's nature in spite of the existence of evil because he accepted that it was possible to realize the triumph of divinity. The essence of his philosophy of human nature is contained in this statement : "Man is higher than the brute and has a divine mission to fulfil . . . To find Truth completely is to realize oneself and one's destiny." Man's true aim is the conquest not of external nature but of his own empirical self, because Atma-Nigraha or the suppression of the lower self can alone vindicate the greatness of the human spirit. Man is essentially good and for asserting this goodness he should advance in the Path of self-conquest. But the belief in the fundamental and essential goodness and purity of the human soul does not imply that society is the sole breeding-ground of contamination and perversity. There is no dominant conception, in Gandhi, of the vitiating and corrupting effects of society on the pure individual, as in Rousseau. Both Gandhi and Rousseau are agreed upon the inner goodness of human nature. But there is difference with regard to the source of depravities. According to Rousseau, contamination is brought about by reason and institutional conventions. Gandhi is more insistent on stressing that human depravity is due to one's past Samskaras. Thus he upholds a more individualistic view than Rousseau. But certainly he does recognize that society also is responsible for several evils.

The individual, conceived in moral and spiritual terms, is of supreme importance in Gandhian political thought. Gandhi wanted to bring about a psychological regeneration of man because he sincerely believed that there was something inherently divine in man's nature. The empirical man, indeed, has elements of the demon or evil in him but the inmost ideal being of the same man has divine potentialities.<sup>5</sup> Gandhi said : "Man in the flesh is essentially imperfect" and although he may be described as made in the image of God, he is far from being God, hence the task of moral education is to transmute the lower (Asuri and Tamsika) self of man into his higher ideal (Sattvika) self.

Human nature, certainly, is not a static immutable substance but is plastic and amenable to changes by processes of moral and psychological conditioning. Gandhi regards religion as an entity which binds a person indissolubly to the inner truth and bring about a change in one's nature through constant purification. He says :

"It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known

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<sup>5</sup> In article entitled "Not quite so Bad", *Harijan*, July 28, 1940, Gandhi categorically referred to "the divinity man shares with God Himself."

its Maker and appreciate the true correspondence between the Maker and itself.”<sup>6</sup>

Gandhi wrote : “My belief in the capacity of non-violence rejects the theory of permanent inelasticity of human nature.”<sup>7</sup> Hence the conquest of evil propensities is possible.

Gandhi, therefore, adhered to the concept of the religious remaking of human nature<sup>8</sup> as the antecedent to any lasting social and political transformation. The theory of the spiritualization and ethicization of politics in Gandhian thought demands the fundamental remaking of human nature. As a believer in the eternality and essentiality of the soul (Atman) of man, Gandhi accepted that by a process of prolonged Tapasya<sup>9</sup> or purification it was possible to remake human nature. He accepted that “man can change his temperament, can control it,”<sup>10</sup> although he did confess in his *Autobiography* that it is very difficult to fight with strong Samskara.<sup>11</sup> He never despaired of human nature, however. He wrote : “Human nature will only find itself when it fully realizes that to be human it has to cease to be beastly or brutal. Though we have the human form, without the attainment of the virtue of non-violence we still share the qualities of our remote reputed ancestor, the orang-outang.”

Gandhi, as stated above, emphasizes the necessity of constant efforts for the moral and spiritual remaking of man. Indirectly, thus, he is opposed to all those sociologists who taught a mechanical automatism of human progress brought about by the inevitable working of objective forces. Gandhi accepts the creative power of self-suffering human individuals and by his philosophical notion that incessant efforts for the perfection of individuality lie at the root of progress, he makes the exponents of modern thought aware of the significance of spiritual subjectivism. According to him, even social betterment depends upon individual efforts for self-purification. A holy life alone reveals the inner potentialities of the soul and is a most potent technic for influencing the people of the neighbourhood. In the dark days of communal massacres in 1946 and 1947, Gandhi

6 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 109.

7 M. K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, p. 69.

8 M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan* (1940) : “I believe and have noticed too that thought transforms man's features as well as character.”

9 M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan* (1940) : “We read in our religious books that whenever, in the days of old, all ordinary means failed to secure release from an ordeal or calamity people resorted to *Tapasya*, that is, actually burnt themselves. I do not regard these stories as legendary.”

10 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, p. 139 : “Man can change his temperament, can control it, but cannot eradicate it. God has not given him so much liberty.” Gandhi does acknowledge that it is almost impossible to change the peculiarities of a man's “spiritual constitution.”

11 M. K. Gandhi, “Result of Introspection,” *Autobiography*, pp. 195-96, points out that to erase the impressions (Samskara) with which one is born is very difficult.

12 *Harijan*, October 8, 1938.

taught the technic of influencing the conduct of others by setting personal examples in nobility, decency and absence of communal bitterness. Thus the revelation of the concealed moral powers of the human subject is a cardinal point in the psychological thought of Gandhi.

Gandhi believed in the innate goodness of man because of his (man's) spiritual origin and hence he stressed incessant endeavours for the realization of human perfectibility. Perfection is attained by a transcendence of the immoral depravities and perversities and hence he always emphasizes individual purification and says that it is possible to conquer evil by prolonged Sadhana and grace of God. Although there are innate good Samskara also in man they have to be developed. The potential Sattva has to be actualized. For example, Gandhi pointed out the means to cultivate Ahimsa: (a) Resolute will to root out untruth and Himsa, (b) constructive work and (c) basing of domestic relations on Ahimsa. Thus he believes that the nobler elements in human nature can be developed and perfected. Hence, he is in a different category from the Aristotelian and Marxist sociologists whose basic orientation and approach is societarian, because the former upholds that the regeneration of man consists in the disposition to will the good of all and to act accordingly. He thought that if there will be no moral progression, retrogression was inevitable and hence he urged the cultivation of faultless moral and psychological excellence. This was to be made possible by the actualization of the moral laws in human relations.<sup>13</sup> Like the ancient Vedanta and Samkhya, he believed in the theory of "eternal cycle" of births and deaths and therefrom followed his notion of incessant moral action because due to the existence of the cycle nothing is really lost. Man can regenerate his nature by the performance of Sattvika actions and the consequent accumulation of merit. Nothing good is lost in a spiritual universe. Hence, in spite of the prevalence of sin and evil in the world, in Gandhi, we find not historical pessimism or cosmic gloom but the ardent faith in the moral governance of the world-process and the consequent optimism regarding the psychological regeneration of man.<sup>14</sup>

But Gandhi would not sanction any coercion<sup>15</sup> for making people moral.<sup>16</sup> Like Bosanquet, Gandhi holds that there is no place for the exercise of coercion in religion. He once said :

13 M. K. Gandhi, *Harjan* (1940) : "My own experience of human nature is that bitternesses are forgotten when parties wish to come together."

14 M. K. Gandhi, *Harjan* (1940) : "The first condition of non-violence is justice all round in every department of life. Perhaps it is too much to expect of human nature. I do not, however, think so. No one should dogmatize about the capacity of human nature for degradation or exaltation." (Emphasis added).

15 Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 201, wrote : "And there should be no compulsion in religion or in matters of any reform. The movement for the removal of untouchability is one of self-purification. No man can be purified against his will." (Our Italics)

16 Gandhi wrote : "No action, which is not voluntary can be called moral. So long as we act as machines, there can be no question of morality. If we want

"How can I, the champion of *Ahimsa*, compel anyone to perform even a good act? Has not a well-known Englishman said that to make mistakes as a free man is better than being in bondage in order to avoid them? I believe in the truth of this. The reason is obvious. The mind of a man who remains good under compulsion cannot improve, in fact it worsens. And when compulsion is removed all the defects well up to the surface with even greater force."<sup>17</sup>

Moral and spiritual goodness is acquired by a process of introspective scrutiny, cultivation of character and the realization of the sense of unity of living beings. It is fantastic to hope that the threats of the administrative system will make the individuals moral. Only Seva and Sadhana can lead to the true moral evolution<sup>18</sup> of man which is dependent upon the slow inwardization of the great vows or Vratas<sup>19</sup> inculcated in the scriptures and accepted by Gandhi for himself and for the members of his Ashrama. He, hence, emphasized the dignity and sanctity of the conscience<sup>20</sup> of the individual and prescribed an internal judgement for the rightness or otherwise of human actions and motives. Thus moral evolution and not governmental coercion was the remedy.

The individual seeking to better his character and influencing others by moral technics is the starting-point of Gandhian psychology. Gandhi had supreme faith in the inner nobility and decency of human nature and hence he accepted the superiority of voluntary suffering for the conversion of the antagonists. Like Buddha, he believed that the enemy has to be converted into a colleague and helper. The immanent presence of God has to be realized even in the thief, the robber and the scoundrel. He said that there should be no cooperation with evil but there should be no hatred against the evil-doer, because ill-will proceeds out of weakness and helpless ignorance. He claimed that he was "transforming the ill-will from

to call an action moral, it should have been done consciously and as a matter of duty. Any action that is dictated by fear or coercion of any kind ceases to be moral." In a statement reminiscent of John Stuart Mill, Gandhi wrote : "But I may not by physical force compel my son to become good." (M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 161).

<sup>17</sup> *Harijan*, August 29, 1946.

<sup>18</sup> Gandhi (quoted in Henry Polak, "The Wisdom of Gandhiji", S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *M. Gandhi*, p. 248), stated : "Religion is a thing not alien to us : it has to be evolved out of us. *It is always within us*; with some, consciously so, with others quite unconsciously. *But it is always there*. And whether we wake up this religious instinct in us through outside assistance or by inward growth, no matter how it is done, it has got to be done, if we want to do anything in the right manner, or to achieve anything that is going to persist." (Our Italics).

<sup>19</sup> For Vratas and Anuvratas, Pyarelal, *M. Gandhi, The Early Phase* (Navajivan, 1964) p. 278.

<sup>20</sup> M. K. Gandhi, "Under Conscience's Cover", *Young India*, August 21, 1924, p. 278, points out that conscience is not wilfulness but it is realized by the "strictest discipline."

men to things." He believed in touching the heart of his political opponents and had faith in the efficacy of the technic of appeal. In South Africa he published a pamphlet which had the word "Appeal" in its title.<sup>21</sup> He believed in the soundness of the appeal to the human heart. He always appealed to man and especially to the Sattvika and the divine in man. His speeches and writings, hence, always have a great personal appeal. Thus his letters to Irwin in 1931 and to Linlithgow in 1943 have moving power because they proceed from a person who was dedicated to economic and political work from deep religious conviction. In a talk with Miss Agatha Harrison on the 6th March 1939, Gandhi remarked soliloquizing ; "Somehow I am able to draw the noblest in mankind and that is what enables me to maintain my faith in God and human nature." He felt that a disciplined and determined individual could do a lot in reforming his neighbourhood and the institutions of which he was a member because the conscience of man takes delight in effectuating the good of all. Hence while the Greek philosophers put the primacy on the *polis* and the Roman thinkers stressed the *civitas* in their social and political speculations, Gandhi started with the Atman—man as a subjective entity.

Gandhi sincerely believed in at least the dormant presence of the divine element ever in the Nazis, whom the world regarded as base, barbaric and brutish. He never despaired of even their eventual conversion<sup>22</sup> and felt that the active non-violence of the Jews could melt the stoniest German hearts. Instead of being passively killed, Gandhi wanted the German Jews to have practised organized, prayerful, non-violent resistance against the Nazi hordes.

Man has physical, social, political, economic and intellectual aspects but none of them exhausts his confines and possibilities.<sup>23</sup> He is essentially a spirit. The spirit provides unity to the different phases of his existence and hence a comprehensive psycho-spiritual solution is needed. But this is dependent upon the energization of moral sensibilities and feelings and hence the stress should always be on the moral and spiritual aspect rather than on the intellectual, the scientific and the institutional.

According to Gandhi, the human soul is the basic category in any plan for social and political reconstruction.<sup>24</sup> He did not start

21 M. K. Gandhi, *The Indian Franchise, An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa* (1895), *The Collected Works of M. Gandhi* (Delhi, Publications Division) Vol. I, pp. 256-86.

22 Cf. Gandhi's letter to Hitler written on July 22, 1939. The text of the letter is given in the *Harijan*, September 9, 1939.

23 Gandhi was a relentless critic of those psycho-analysts and pan-sexualists who attempt to explain the whole of human life and conduct by the sheer manifestations of sex. He said that people engaged in the hard struggles of life are certainly not as dominated with sex "as it seems to dominate the lives of those who are saturated with the modern sex literature." (*Harijan*, 1940).

24 Cf. Quoted in H.T. Majumdar, *M. Gandhi*, p. 85: "I should feel that if we succeed in building the character of the individual, society will take care of itself. I would be

with the lifeless mechanisms of institutions. Institutions represent only the externalization of the basic psychological wishes, drives and propensities. Like Plato, Gandhi also felt that the community is the result of the qualities and character of the individuals and held that the true and basic remedy for social evils is the moralization of human nature or a moral change of the human heart. Gandhi, however, is not opposed to institutional changes. He did believe in changes in the structure of society and politics. It is true that he sponsored the radical gospel of the religious remaking of human nature. But this does not mean that he was unmindful of changes in the political, economic and social structure. His career offers the momentous example of the leadership of an individual challenging two great organized institutions—the government of the Union of South Africa and the empire of Britain. Just as Aristotle in his criticisms of Phaleas of Chalcedon and Hippodamus<sup>25</sup> pointed out that man's moral faculties have to be ennobled and that the sole reliance should not be placed on surface external changes in the outward organizations, so also Gandhi wanted not only the end of the alien regime but the final elimination of even the desire to dominate over others and expropriate their property. It is evident that he adopted a moral and psychological approach for the solution of economic and political problems. He also did accept the necessity of social, economic and political changes. The fundamental and ultimate solution of the matter, however, according to him, is the religious making of man. The human heart, he felt, holds the final key to all social and political dynamics.

If we study the evolution of social structures and morals, we find that compared to the primitive clans there has been at least partial improvement, in a moral sense, in human nature. In some primitive groups the notion was dominant that whosoever was not a member of that group was to be killed. But, I believe, no group today will sanction cannibalism or human sacrifice.<sup>26</sup> Whatsoever there is of stability in the human family system, also represents the triumph of affection and love. Thus the development of sentiments and emotions round the institution of the family is an additional testimony to the slow moral evolution of human nature. Even in the other realms of social, economic and political life there is evinced a slow tendency towards the lessening of the areas of conflict. Cooperation and mutual aid as well as beneficence are also socially operative factors. So much seems evident to me that if there has to be a real change for the better in human society, it is to be brought about not primarily by institutional mechanics but by the energization of moral feelings. I do not concur with Lenin's thesis that the sociali-

quite willing to trust the organization of society to individuals so developed.”  
(Our Italics).

25 Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II.

26 In the newspapers one, however, does read of rare occurrences of cannibalism.

zation of the means of production will effectuate a change in human nature. Gandhi stressed the technic of cultivation of altruistic virtues and feelings for bringing about a change in human nature which implies the suppression of the demonic elements. The concept of the change of human nature was discussed in ancient India by Gautama Buddha and Patanjali and even if partly realized will do a great deal in the moralization of politics.

## 2. Gandhi's Spiritual Humanism

Gandhi was a great devotee of God but he had also immense faith in man. There was no antithesis between his humanism and his belief in divine providence. He said : "My faith is in God and therefore in the people." God is organically bound up with mankind and all living beings. Hence love for man leads to the realization of God.

I consider Gandhi a humanist in two senses. First, he has attributed a significant and exalted character to the ideals and aspirations of the common man—the untouchable, the peasant, the weaver and the worker. He was the spokesman of their sentiments. The world today is dominated by the fetishism of eternal objects. Man loves commodities, capital and accumulation. But to a growingly de-humanized world, Gandhi taught the sacredness of the feelings even in the hearts of the most distressed and indigent individuals. Gandhi was neither a Junker, nor an aristocrat nor a bourgeois intellectual but was a leader of the people and loved the people from the depths of his being. The sufferings of the Indian peasants brought forth all the agonies of his soul. Hence he tried to identify himself with the loneliest, the disinherited, the meek and the humblest. He cried :

"It is the greatest tragedy I know of, these men and women —our brothers and sisters—dying a slow, torturing death. Theirs is an eternal, compulsory fast. And as they break it occasionally with rice, they seem to mock us with the life they live."

Gandhi used the word Daridranarayan—God of the poor or God appearing in the hearts of the poor. He got this word from Deshbhandhu C. R. Das.<sup>27</sup> Even earlier than Das, Vivekananda used this word. In the tattered bodies of the peasants and workers in Champaran, Gandhi saw the concrete embodiment of God, Truth and Ahimsa. His overflowing love for the suffering and exploited humanity revealed his intense humanism. If Auguste Comte taught positivism as 'worship of humanity', Gandhi was a teacher of kind service to the suffering people. The essence of the humanist spirit is deep love for the people. Gandhi's sincere love and regard for the people was an expression of his humanism. Even General Smuts (1870-1951) testified to Gandhi's humanism. J. C. Smuts wrote :

<sup>27</sup> *Young India*, April 4, 1929.

"However often we may differ from him, we are conscious all the time of his sincerity, his unselfishness, and above all of his fundamental and universal humanity. He always acts as a great human, with deep sympathy for men of all classes and all races and especially for the under-dog."<sup>28</sup>

His humanism inspired his sufferings in serving the sick and the leper. He derived satisfaction from affectionate service and ministrations to the victims of disease. There were others in the Ashrama who would have been glad to take care of the sick, but Gandhi's humanity was so deep that he would personally take care of them. Furthermore, to the dilapidated hovels of the suffering Indian farmers, he brought a message of love, hope and kindness.

Secondly, Gandhi was a humanist because he had faith in the redemption and regeneration of man. He never despaired of man. In 1946-1947, due to the upsurge of communal frenzy on an unprecedentedly furious scale, he was a little perturbed. He saw the edifice he had built with the ardent Tapasya of over twentyfive years tottering but still he was hopeful. Like a profound spiritual humanist he wrote : "You must not lose faith in humanity . . . Humanity is an ocean ; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty."

In the West, humanism is regarded as a philosophy which champions the cause of man's freedom and individuality against a theological world-view. The Renaissance humanists like Erasmus and the eighteenth century humanists like Herder were opposed to the claims of the Bible, the Papacy and the protagonists of the theistic and ecclesiastical orientation. The humanism of Ludwig Feuerbach and of Karl Marx in his earlier writings is frankly materialistic in its assumptions. Due to the impact of scientific thought sometimes it has been assumed that there is an antithesis between belief in a religious world-view and the adherence to humanism. The exponents of scientific humanism argue that humanism is opposed to the theocentric add transcendental world-view. But the Indian tradition of humanism is different. Gautama Buddha remains unexcelled in his boundless love for mankind although he accepted the super-historical concepts of Nirvana and Samadhi. Even in modern India Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo have been champions of spiritual humanism although both had profound belief in God. In the West, humanism is oriented to raising man, as if, against the imperialism of God. In Indian thought, on the other hand, the status of man is sought to be exalted by stressing his spiritual potentialities. The essence of spiritual humanism as enunciated by Gandhi is to stress the significance of the universal values in man. The differences between men are apparent and superficial.

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28 J. C. Smuts, "Gandhi's Political Method" in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.) *M. Gandhi*, Indian edition, 1944, p. 301.

The grave is the final destiny of all men.<sup>29</sup> But the fundamental spirit in man is undying and perennial. Hence all men should be treated with respect and decency and the dignity of all should be protected and defended.<sup>30</sup> He pointed out : "No human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption; no human being is so perfect as to warrant his destroying him whom he considers to be wholly evil." Gandhi's adherence to the absolutism of truth and non-violence made him hostile to the destruction of life in any form. Life postulates respect for it. He regarded all life as sacred. Hence human life is entitled to dignity, consideration and love.

Adopting the terminology of the West, I have considered Gandhi as a spiritual humanist. Nevertheless, I would regard it as an incorrect interpretation to construe humanism and that also without any qualifying adjective to be the essence of Gandhi's political philosophy and his personality, as has been the fashion in some Marxist and Semi-Gandhian circles. It is true that against the Augustinian conception of the depravity of the human being, the Renaissance humanists exalted the dignity of man. It is also true that the advance of humanism has resulted in the emphasis on the role of man in changing society instead of accepting the social structure as something given. It must not be forgotten, however, that the essence of humanism is to stress the aesthetic enjoyment of harmless pleasures and the good life. Some aspects of Italian humanism even attacked asceticism. It has to be stressed that humanism is the creed of the intellectual and the aesthete and is never removed from its roots in sensuousness. Gandhi, to the contrary, loved man but not because he attached any special value to the latter's emotions and feelings but because he considered him an aspect or a mode of God or the Absolute. Instead of accepting the empirical ego with its drives, passions and conations as the centre of attention, Gandhi prescribed a hard discipline of the will for the taming of human desires so that final liberation or Moksha could be realized.

I would also consider it as incorrect to interpret Satyagraha as a humanist protest against injustice, oppression and wrong. Satyagraha, indeed, includes the technology for the moral redress of wrongs. But it is to be conducted in a spirit of loyalty to the laws

29 M. K. Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* (1940) : "Can he (Hitler) digest so much power? Personally he will go as empty-handed as his not very remote predecessor Alexander." M. K. Gandhi, *To Hindus and Muslims* : "Man is nothing. Napoleon planned much but found himself a prisoner in St. Helena. The mighty Kaiser aimed at the crown of Europe and is reduced to the status of a private gentleman. God has so willed it. Let us contemplate such examples and be humble."

30 Cf. Rabindranath Tagore's article in the *Vishvabharati Quarterly's Gandhi Memorial Peace Number*, p. 13, where the poet refers to Gandhi's "deep and insistent humanity; for it insists that men in their fight for their claims must only so assert their rights, whether as individuals or as groups, as never to violate their fundamental obligation to humanity which is to respect life." (Our Italics).

of God or which is the same thing, in obedience to the commands of conscience. Any kind of protest, even if based on moral grounds, is not to be considered a species of Satyagraha. Satyagraha is launched with the firmness of belief in Truth which is God. To strip Gandhism of its spiritual roots may appeal to the modern intellectual, but it will not be a faithful interpretation of Gandhism. Since the time that M. N. Roy renounced Marxism and began to propound his New Humanism, the world humanism has gained currency in Indian leftist circles. Furthermore, the publication of the early philosophical writings of Marx wherein he appears as a proponent of the creative role of the human being in the epistemological process as well as in the mundane sphere of moulding of society, the word humanism has gained additional popularity as implying protest against alienation. Gandhi, however, would have been shocked to find that all his Sadhana and activities as a Karmayogi for half a century yielded no more fruits than his advocacy of the creed of humanism which is, in its essential philosophical foundations, only a restatement of fifteenth century Italian thought and has its ultimate root in the pagan antiquities. To deny the spiritual roots of Satyagraha by interpreting it as a humanist protest against injustice and wrong is to ignore the vital aspects of this theory. Why cannot one rest content with saying that Satyagraha with its spiritual and moral foundations in Truth and Ahimsa is the permanent contribution of Gandhi to the world ? Why must humanism with its pagan, Italian and Marxist overtones be considered the vital basis and permanent core of Gandhism ?

# 5

## RELIGION AND POLITICS IN GANDHIAN THOUGHT

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### 1. Religion as Ethics : Theory of Ethical Religion

Gandhi believed in the stupendously creative force of religion in human life. He claimed, however, to be a practical religious idealist and was not much interested in the transcendental and eschatological aspects of religion. He did not concern himself much with the supernal mysteries of the beyond but was primarily involved in the ethical aspects of religion. He does not, hence, refer in his writings to the dialectics of revealed and natural theology. But since he accepted the teachings of the Gita which also contains disquisition regarding the metaphysics of the Brahman, the Atman, the Purushottama, the Kshetrajna, the two paths of Devayana and Pitriyana etc., it will be a valid interpretation of his ideas to state that he accepted the fundamental metaphysical and theological conceptions of the Hindu religion. Gandhian theology, thus, postulated belief in God, the transmigration of souls and Karman.

The dominating theme, however, of his writings is the inculcation of the primarily moral norms of truth and non-violence. He always spoke of religion in terms of ethical idealism and regarded spiritual prefection as only the consummation of moral endeavours (Vrata). Religion signified, to him, belief in the ordered moral governance of the world and the spirit of faith in and dependence upon the absolute truth. Hence it demanded a complete consecration of a man's being and personality to Truth which is God and implied an emphasis on the moral values of man as spirit.<sup>1</sup> Gandhi, therefore, always talked of "Ethical Religion" and wrote :

Gandhi explained the moral vitality derived from a religious life with reference to the battle between Lakshmana and Meghanada of ancient Indian History. He (*Speeches and Writings*, pp. 165-66) said : "You will recall the instance of Lakshmana on the one hand and Indrajit on the other in that inimitable book Ramayana. Both Lakshmana and Indrajit performed austerities, both of them had attained to a certain kind of self-control, and yet we find that what Indrajit possessed was a mere dross and that what Lakshmana possessed was of great assistance and he has left a treasure for us to cherish and to value. What was that additional quality that Lakshmana

‘For me morals, ethics, and religion are convertible terms. A moral life without reference to religion is like a house built upon sand. And religion divorced from morality is like ‘sounding brass’ good only for making a noise and breaking heads.’<sup>2</sup>

As soon as the moral basis is lost one ceases to be religious.<sup>3</sup> He said : “All religions are founded on the same moral laws. My ethical religion is made up of laws which bind men all over the world.” Gandhi stated : “Religion is to morality what water is to the seed that is sown in soil.” “True religion and true morality are bound up with each other” and “the essence of religion is morality.” The Gandhian concept of religion would be, thus, somewhat similar to Matthew Arnorld’s view of religion as morality suffused with emotion.

Karmayoga rooted in Anasakti is the essence of Gandhi’s “Ethical Religion.” The true religious attitude means the voluntary acceptance and the enthusiastic fulfilment of the duties that naturally come one’s way. This is the meaning of Karmayoga according to one’s Svadharma. In the spirit of the Gita, he felt that pursued with a sense of detachment and equanimity the life of Karmayoga could lead to the attainment of Moksha.<sup>4</sup> He wrote in the preface to his *Autobiography* that he was essentially a religious man aspiring after Moksha which signifies emancipation of the soul from the ubiquitous entropy of Maya. But emancipation or liberation, to Gandhi, did not signify isolation and leading the life of the recluse. Neither did it mean the negation and repudiation of the claims of the society and humanity upon a person. Gandhi repeatedly said that for him there could be no realization of God and soul apart from the service of mankind. A life of dedicated service to one’s kind does not generate an attitude of aggressive or self-righteous altruism, but will lead to a progressive expansion of the human self till it came to comprehend within it and thus become spiritually unified with almost the whole of human kind. Karma-yoga is the disinterested pursuit of one’s obligations and duties and

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possessed ? I venture to suggest to you that Lakshmana was divinely guided, that he had religious perception and that his life was guided upon principles and based upon religion, while that of Indrajit was based upon irreligion. Life without religion, I hold, is life without principle, and life without principle is like a ship without a rudder : and just as a ship without a rudder will be tossed about from place to place, and never reach its destination, so will a man without this religious backing, without that hard grasp of religion be also tossed about on this stormy ocean of the world.”

2 *Harijan*, October 3, 1936.

3 M. K. Gandhi, *To Hindus and Muslims* : “As soon as we lose the moral basis we cease to be religious. There is no such thing as religion overriding morality. Men, for instance, cannot be cruel, untruthful or incontinent and claim to have God on their side.”

4 Gandhi said that if the central theme of the Gita was Anasakti (disinterestedness), it also teaches non-violence.

that gradually produces a cosmic and spiritual awareness. The religious spirit implies the performance of one's duties not out of the fear of penal sanctions but being implied by a sense of inner compulsiveness generated by the motive of self-purification and compassion for human beings. In the human heart an eternal battle is raging between the forces of good and evil and Karmayoga signifies the elimination of the latter and the victory of truth, good and virtue. In the present materialistic and sensate phase of human civilization Gandhi's conception of Karmayoga, as established on the basis of the teachings of the Gita is a fundamental contribution to practical ethics. It reasserts the significance of disinterested action as the secret of religious idealism.<sup>5</sup>

Although Gandhi only spoke of Ethical Religion, he had a more penetrating, intense and personal grasp of the depths of religious experience than Plato and Rousseau who also to a certain extent, preach the doctrine of the religious foundation of politics.<sup>6</sup> Plato and Rousseau were, at best, intellectuals and philosophers. Possibly, Plato had some mystic perceptions. Gandhi's spirit, on the other hand, cried for the personal realization of God and he wanted to make a purified life the basis for social and political action. Hence in Gandhi's conceptions of religion as morality or Ethical Religion there is present the convincing power of his personality. He practised what he preached. He himself practised the religious virtues and wanted that they should be practised by other individuals even on a social and political scale.

Gandhi's advocacy of the religious approach to politics follows from his theory of Karmayoga and is based on the view that human history bears witness to the conquering power of religious consciousness. He wrote :

"Superstition, evil customs, and other impressions creep (into society) from age to age, and mar religion for the time being. They come and go. But religion itself remains. Because the existence of the world, in a broad sense, depends on religion. The ultimate definition of religion may be said to be obedient to the law of God. God and His law are synonymous terms."<sup>7</sup>

5 Cf. the *Epistle of the Apostle James*, II, 17, 26 : "Even so faith if it hath not works, is dead, being alone....For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. In support of the doctrine of justification by deeds, James cites the instances of Abraham and Rahale.

6 Plato in the *Laws* and Rousseau in the chapter entitled "Civil Religion" in *The Social Contract*.

7 M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan* (1940). I think he would have agreed with the moral connotation given to law by St. Paul when he says : "Owe no man anything, but to love one another : for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour : therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."—*Romans*, XIII, 8, 10. Paul points out that one does not know what sin is except for the Law. He quotes Moses who wrote : "those who keep the Law will draw life from it."—*Romans*, X, 5.

Therefore God signifies an unchanging and living law. No one has ever really found Him. But prophets and avatars have by their *tapasya* given to mankind a faint glimpse of the eternal law.”<sup>8</sup>

When Gandhi speaks of the synonymous character of God and his law, he has in mind the nature of law not only as immutable order and necessity flowing from the infinite nature of God but also its moral aspects. The great religions of the world have rendered vital service to humanity through their attempt at the gradual chastening of human brutalities because the fundamental aim of religious prophets has been the enhancement of the moral faculties of man. The different religions of the world were studied by Gandhi in a devout spirit and he found that the moral element was common to them. During his early life, he had found similarities of a fundamental character in the *Bhagavadgita*, *The Light of Asia* and the Sermon on the Mount in the *New Testament*. At the time of his wife’s cremation in 1944, the Christian hymn of Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-90), “Lead Kindly Light” was sung.

According to Gandhi, what was fundamental was a personal realization of the religious truths because empty verbal professions were not of much avail. Hence while the dogmatists, the fanatics, the theologians, the scholastics, the bishops and pontiffs were fighting for safeguarding their own rights and leadership, Gandhi stood for the development of the purity of personal character through the practice of ethical religion. It was ridiculous to fight in the name of religion, according to him. All religions, barring certain difference in emphasis, believe in the same fundamental maxims and postulate of the moral code.<sup>10</sup> Hence Gandhi wanted the end of religious struggles. He said in a prayer meeting in Noakhali on January 8, 1947 : “All religions were equal, . . . Religions were like leaves of the same tree. There was nothing to quarrel among Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others.” Gandhi, thus, was devoted to the conception of a religion which inculcates the notion of cosmic moral order. He wrote : “It is not less real because it is not seen. This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonizes them and gives them reality.”

There was no question at all of any dictation or authoritarian imposition of his religious doctrines on others. Coercion is opposed to genuine religious growth. Gandhi’s technic was to help in the slow moral evolution of his associates. Thus compulsion as a technic has

8 M. K. Gandhi, *Harajan* (1940).

9 “Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,

Lead thou me on :

The night is dark and I am far from home,

Lead thou me on.

Keep thou my feet, I do not ask to see

The distant scene ; one step enough for me.”

10 Cf. the views of Asoka and Locke.

no place in Gandhi's religious philosophy. Man can only be persuaded to be religious and not dictated so to be.

## 2. Gandhi's Concept of Hinduism

Mahatma Gandhi called himself a Hindu and even a Sanatanist Hindu. There was a time when his Christian friends hoped that he would accept Christianity.<sup>11</sup> But, finally, in South Africa he decided that salvation for him was possible only through Hinduism. Gradually, his experience in life deepened his faith in the central teachings of Hinduism and he said that Hinduism signifies a relentless search after truth. He once wrote : "Hindu Dharma is like a boundless ocean teeming with priceless gems. The deeper you dive, the more treasures you find."<sup>12</sup>

Gandhi, in an article entitled "Hinduism,"<sup>13</sup> categorically declared his faith and creed : "I call myself a Sanatani Hindu, because :

- (i) I believe in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures, and therefore in avatars and rebirth ;
- (ii) I believe in the Varnashrama Dharma in a sense, in my opinion, strictly Vedic, but not in its present popular and crude sense ;
- (iii) I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular,<sup>14</sup>
- (iv) I do not disbelieve in idol worship."<sup>15</sup>

Gandhi was a great Hindu, one whose whole life was, in a sense, a graphic commentary on the teachings of the *Bhagavadgita*. But he had risen beyond the bounds of any credal denominationalism and he embraced the followers of all religions. Like Buddha, Gandhi also was above the bounds of cults, rituals and ceremonies. He believed in genuine religious fellowship and fraternity. His synthetic mind found common points of fundamental ethical significance in all the religious scriptures of the world. He not only, hence, believed in the spiritual tenets of Hinduism but he accepted all religions to be equally true,<sup>16</sup> although, for him, he recognized the supreme consoling power of the teachings of the *Bhagavadgita*, the *Isha Upanishad*.

<sup>11</sup> "Religious Ferment", *Autobiography*, Vol. I, p. 317.

<sup>12</sup> *Harijan*, June 2, 1946.

<sup>13</sup> *Young India*, October 6, 1921.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan* (1940) : "As a Hindu, a confirmed vegetarian and a worshipper of the cow, whom I regard with the same veneration as my mother."

<sup>15</sup> Cf. M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, March 9, 1940 : *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, p. 230 : "Idolatry is bad, but not so idol worship. An idolator makes a fetish of his idol. An idol worshipper sees God even in a stone and therefore takes the help of an idol to establish his union with God."

<sup>16</sup> In an early lecture of his, Gandhi, *Collected Works*, Vol. IV, p. 370, recognized Jainism as the "most logical of all faiths" and referred to its scrupulous regard for all existence.

and the *Ramayana* of Tulsidasa.<sup>17</sup> He accepted the spiritual and moral essence of Hinduism which, according to him was the essence also of all the great religions of mankind as Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism. The fundamental point, according to Gandhi, is not adherence to dogmas and creeds but a God-fearing life. A truthful and non-violent life is far superior to the empty loyalty to creeds and cults.

Gandhi's attitude towards Hinduism was liberal and comprehensive. He was no dogmatist. He was opposed to the attempt of Swami Dayananda and the Arya Samaj to make Hinduism rigid.<sup>18</sup> He wrote :

"I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. I believe the Bible, the Koran and the Zend-Avesta to be as divinely inspired as the Vedas. . .Hinduism is not a missionary religion. In it there is room for the worship of all the prophets in the world. It has no doubt absorbed many tribes in its fold, but this absorption has been of evolutionary, imperceptible character. Hinduism tells every one to worship God according to his own faith or Dharma, and so it lives in peace with all religions."<sup>19</sup>

He felt that conversion is a matter of inner transformation and concerns the individual and his God. Hence he was not in favour of the proselytizing attempt of the Shuddhi and the Tabligh movements. Because of his liberal, comprehensive and tolerant approach, Gandhi was sometimes ridiculed and even mobbed in Hindu orthodox circles as in Vaidyanathadham and Madras during his anti-un-touchability campaign. It may be noted that his last pilgrimage, only a couple of days before his martyrdom, was to Mehrauli in Delhi, the seat of a Moslem divine.

### **3. Gandhi on the Vedas and the Upanishads**

Gandhi never claimed to be a profound scholar of the Vedic literature. He was fairly well acquainted with Sanskrit and was a great votary of the Gita. But he had neither the time nor the inclination to undertake an elaborate examination of the Vedic literature. He was, nonetheless, as he claimed to be, generally familiar with its main themes. Once when some Arya Samajist scholars challenged him on the general problem of Vedic interpretation, Gandhi pointed out that although he was no scholar of the Vedas, he knew its basic

17 "I find the greatest consolation from the *Bhagavadgita*, and Tulsidasa's *Ramayana*. I frankly confess that the Quran, the Bible and the other scriptures of the world, in spite of my great regard for them, do not move me as do the Gita of Krishna and the *Ramayana* of Tulsidasa." (M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 1940).

18 M. K. Gandhi, "Hindu-Muslim Tension, Its Cause and Cure," *Young India*, May 29, 1924.

19 "All religions are like different roads leading to the same goal." (*Hind-Swaraj*).

notions and he claimed to be on sound basis with regard to his statements regarding the Vedas. That was the occasion in 1924 when in an article dealing with Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhi had stated that although Swami Dayananda preached against idol worship he had, in a sense, propounded the idolization of the Vedic mantras themselves.<sup>19</sup> This statement offended the Arya Samajist scholars and some of them said that only well-versed savants of the Vedas like Sri Aurobindo, Datta and others of their type should have pronounced upon the Vedas and not a political leader like Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>20</sup>

Gandhi's objection to the idolization of the Vedic literature, as associated with Swami Dayananda and the Arya Samaj is correct. There are hundreds and thousands of Arya Samajists who believe that the four Vedic Samhitas are not only divinely inspired but are the words of God himself. Such a belief, although very dear to the hearts of devotees, will not command the allegiance of a rationalist. Gandhi held that all great religious scriptures are the uttering of the divinely-inspired souls who had the knowledge of God. But since they emanated through human minds they were, to a certain extent, contaminated and hence do contain, also, some inadequate statements. Gandhi would certainly hold that the Vedic Samhitas also suffer from certain inadequacies because even if the fundamental knowledge which they contain may have been intuited upon by or given to the rishis, since they are human utterances they also have elements of imperfections.

In the matter of Vedic interpretation, Gandhi's ideas are rationally sounder than those of Dayananda and the Arya Samaj. The gospel of Vedic infallibility was propounded in the earlier days to bolster the ecclesiastical supremacy of the priests. The very obscurity of several Vedic mantras which were enigmatic even in the ancient period further served to stress Vedic infallibility. The social, economic and political claims of the vast number of masses were ignored and clever people preached the doctrine of Vedic revelation and Vedic infallibility to strengthen their own position. Swami Dayananda's view that the Vedas are the words of God were and exactly, in-their present shape, communicated to four Vedic rishis, Agni, Vayu, Aditya and Angiras, does not appear plausible to a scientific mind. Gandhi's rationalism, on the other hand, is very well demonstrated in his opposition to the revelatory character of the Vedic literature. Although a devout Hindu, he refrained from sanctioning the doctrine of Vedic infallibility.

Gandhi had a comprehensive conception of Svaraj. It did have political, economic and social connotations and it stood for a system wherein there will be social equality, economic uplift of the masses

<sup>19</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma*, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> The Arya Samajist counter-draft had been written by Ram Deva of the Kangri Gurukula.

and elimination of foreign political control. But, at a deeper level, it meant much more than political and economic independence. Gandhi understood Svaraj to be also a moral notion. It means the inner conquest of passions and lust. It signifies the control of the inner Atman over baser instincts. This moral meaning of Svaraj, according to Gandhi, had a Vedic sanction. But here Gandhi does not appear to be on sound philosophical ground. In the Vedic literature, specifically in the Brahmanas and the Upanishads, the word Svarajya is met with. It appears that in the Vedic literature Svarajya and Svarat had only political significance. They stood for territorial overlordship. In the later Sanskrit literature, however, it is possible to find some general sanction for the interpretation of Svaraj as inner governance or spiritual splendour. Thus so far as the moral and spiritual meaning of Svaraja is concerned, such meaning may be substantiated only on the basis of post-Vedic Sanskrit literature. But modern scholars of the Vedas would have serious doubts as to whether Svaraj had a moral or spiritual significance in the Vedic literature. Philosophically and historically speaking, Gandhi's statement that the notion of moral Svaraj had Vedic roots might not be correct. But his view may find substantiation from the later Sanskrit literature.

According to Gandhi, Varna, as understood by him, has a Vedic root. Varna, according to Gandhi, stood for the determination of the occupation of a man. He was a trenchant opponent of the iniquities, inequalities and exploitation associated with the caste system. He said that he wanted to go back to the Vedic notion of Varna when the sense of discrimination and exploitation was absent. There can be no two opinions about the fact that the caste system, historically speaking, has sanctioned a regime of suppression, humiliation and discrimination. Even the Vedic society was not free from social oppression. If one idolizes or idealizes the Vedas there is nothing to argue with him, but scholars who have adopted a critical, historical and comparative attitude to the Vedic literature have come to the conclusion that in the Rig Veda there is present a sense of racial animosity between the invading Aryans and the Dasyus. There is the distinction between the Aryans and the Shudras. Later on, however, the Shudras became the part of the Aryan social system. The *Purusha Sukta*, which is ascribed to Narayana Rishi, is the first great testament of social differentiation in Indian literary history. Modern writers like Dayananda, Sri Aurobindo, Bhagawan Das, Radhakrishnan and others have tried to read the notion of an organic social structure in the *Purusha Sukta*. But a sense of superiority and inferiority is implicit in the analogy of the four parts of the human body, like the head, the hands, the thighs and the feet, that is used there to differentiate the four social orders. To say that the Shudras are born from the feet of the Purusha is a slur on suffering humanity and it explicitly shows that the Rishi named Narayana who wrote this mantra was not a divinely inspired servant of humanity but a social manipulator who was trying to strengthen the intellectual

foundations of an exploitationist society. Hence I think that Gandhi is wrong, on historical grounds, in trying to find a Vedic sanction for his conception of an undifferentiated and equalitarian social structure. It appears that when Gandhi says that his conception of Varna is Vedic he has, possibly, been influenced by the modern idealist interpreters of Hinduism who have tried to interpret the Vedic notions and specially the *Purusha Sukta*, on the model of social organism. It thus appears that Gandhi's attitude towards the Vedas is rationalist but is not completely critical.

So far as the Upanishads are concerned, Gandhi was very much inspired by the first mantra of the *Ishopanishad* which is also incorporated in the fortieth chapter of the *Vajasaneyi Samhita* of the Yajurveda. Gandhi was deeply affected by the doctrine of divine immanence inculcated in this hymn. He also finds sanction in this mantra for his doctrine of non-accumulation. According to him, this mantra preaches the doctrine of enjoyment through renunciation of property. To this extent, Gandhi is right. He has even interpreted this mantra as a foundation of trusteeship which appears to be an over-stretching of the meaning. Gandhi was so much delighted with this particular mantra that he went to the extent of saying that even if the whole of the Hindu religious literature were lost and this one mantra saved, then, on its basis, the literature might be reconstructed. It is true that this statement is a great exaggeration but it certainly indicates Gandhi's veneration for this mantra. As a Hindu and as a political leader, it is clear that Gandhi was not averse to obtaining whatsoever sanction he could from the Vedic literature for his advanced sociological notions. His ideas, certainly, were not derived from the Vedas or the Upanishads, but later on, he tried to find substantiation for them from that literature.

#### **4. Gandhi's Interpretation of the Bhagavadgita**

Gandhi had immense and profound attachment to the Bhagavadgita. He regarded it as his spiritual dictionary which he consulted for guidance on all problems involving moral dilemmas. He went to the extent of calling it "the Mother" in whose lap the tormented devotee could always receive assistance, relief and consolation. He moulded his moral and spiritual life on the basis of this book for nearly fifty years.

According to Gandhi, the Mahabharata is not a historical work. Vyasa is writing the story, not of a battle, but of the dialectics of the human social wherein an eternal duel is going on between the forces of evil and good. The personalities referred to in the epic like Krishna, Arjuna, and Bhisma may have been historically real entities but in the Mahabharata they are used for symbolical purposes and may, perhaps, be said to stand for human psychic faculties. Thus the Mahabharata, of which the Gita forms a part, is not a work of ancient Indian history but is the storehouse of the spiritual and moral experiences of the Indian seers of old. These

experiences recorded therein have received an additional halo of authenticity because they have been testified to be true by the subsequent experiences of generations of devotees. Hence Gandhi wrote : “Thus the composers breathe life into their compositions, and the votaries nurse them into robustness by living them.”

The central tenet of the Gita, according to Gandhi, is Anasaktiyoga or the notion of the performance of one's duties with detachment. This central concept is expounded in the second chapter and the third chapter points out the method for implementing that message. Gandhi finds theoretical support for the concept of altruistically inspired activities (Yajna) from this book. Doing one's duty that naturally comes one's way (Svadharma) in a spirit of detachment and equanimity is the simple and powerful gospel of the Gita although Gandhi said that intellectuals like Tilak had been diving deep into its metaphysical profundities.

A person who wants to be Anasakta has necessarily to follow the path of non-violence. Disinterestedness is the goal and Ahimsa is the means. Hence Anasakti may be said to transcend Ahimsa.

Gandhi stated that in the Gita the reference to war is for analogical or illustrative purpose,<sup>21</sup> the central aim being to vindicate the superiority of good over evil. He did recognize that it was quite likely that the author of the Gita did not aim to teach Ahimsa but as an interpreter he (Gandhi) said that if the central theme of the Gita is Anasakti, it also teaches Ahimsa.<sup>22</sup> Thus in his zeal and enthusiasm for Ahimsa, Gandhi transforms the gospel of *dharma sangrama* (धर्म संग्राम) into the gospel of social altruism. He, however, right in his view that in the Mahabharata, Vyasa has shown the futility of war because so immense was the destruction that even the victors had to weep.

## 5. Hinduism and Buddhism

Gandhi had read the life of Buddha written in verse, on the basis of Buddhist sources by the British journalist and poet E. Arnold (1832-1904).<sup>23</sup> He had been deeply inspired by the life and personality of Buddha.<sup>24</sup> But he held that Buddha also subscribed

21 M.K. Gandhi, *Anasaktiyoga*, Preface.

22 Only one who attains to the state of Trigunatita, can be said to go beyond the dialectics of Himsa and Ahimsa.

23 Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia* (1879).

24 It is possible to trace the Buddhist foundations of the Gandhian philosophy of politics in the following verses of the *Dhammapadam*:

न हि वेरेन वेराति समन्तीध कुदाचनं ।

अवेरेन च सम्मति एस धम्मो सनन्तनो ॥ (I/4)

जयं वेरं पसवति दुर्ज्यं सेति पराजितो ।

उपसन्तो सुखं सेति हित्वा जयपराजयं ॥ (XV/5)

अवकोषेन जिने कोर्धं असाधुं साधुना जिने ।

जिने कदरियं दानेन सञ्जेन अलिकवादिनं ॥ (XVII)

to essential metaphysical and ethical bases of Hinduism. According to Gandhi the contributions of Gautama Buddha were the following :—

- (i) Buddha revivified some of the old Vedic teachings.
- (ii) Buddha enunciated the law of cosmic moral governance and identified this law with God.
- (iii) Buddha stressed the sacredness of all life.<sup>25</sup>

Like Vivekananda, Gandhi also took the view that Buddhism was not antithetical to Hinduism but was only a modified restatement of Hinduism. In his Hinduist zeal, Gandhi went to the extent of saying, that "what Hinduism did not assimilate of what passes as Buddhism today was not an essential part of Buddha's life and his teachings." It was his firm view that Buddha never rejected Hinduism but only broadened its base.<sup>26</sup> He exhorted the Buddhists to follow the way of righteousness inculcated by Siddhartha Sakyamuni.<sup>27</sup>

Gandhi, it is amply clear, supported a positivistic interpretation of the teachings of Buddha. His views receive corroboration from the researches of C. A. F. Rhys Davis and some of the sayings of Ramakrishna. There were some schools of Buddhist absolutism which put a positivist interpretation on concepts like Tathata, Tathagatagarbha etc. But the overwhelming mass of Buddhist writings is in support of ascribing atheism to Gautama.<sup>28</sup>

## **6. Religious Basis of Politics**

Gopal Krishna Gokhale(1866-1915), the Moderate leader from Maharashtra, who is sometimes regarded by his admirers as the Indian Gladstone, although only three years senior to Mahatma Gandhi, was venerated by the latter as his political Guru. Gandhi wanted, like Gokhale, a spiritualization of politics.<sup>29</sup> Gokhale stressed the incorporation of moral value in politics and this prin-

25 *Young India*, November 24, 1927, p. 292.

26 *Ibid.*

27 M.K. Gandhi's speech in Ceylon on November 25, 1927, *Young India*, December 8, 1927, p. 410.

28 For details, V. P. Varma, *Bharatiya Darshana* (Agra, Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, 1967), pp. 87-137.

29 Explaining this concept of "spiritualization of politics" in a speech in Bangalore, Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings*, p. 138, said : "I think the political life must be an echo of private life and that there cannot be any divorce between the two."

J.B. Kripalani, "Spirituality and Politics", *Gandhian Thought*, pp. 107-11, points out that a distinction should be made between spirituality and ethics. Political conduct can be made to manifest the criteria of honour and integrity. But spirituality being mainly concerned with inner purification involves questions of motive and intention. If the notions of motives and springs of conduct are brought into politics, law and social conduct, public life instead of being purified and elevated would be confused." It must be noted, however, that Gandhi was immensely concerned with the purification of motivations and intentions. Kripalani's objections may be correct from a pragmatic standpoint but are not Gandhian.

ciple was incorporated in the constitution of the Servants of India Society.<sup>30</sup> Gandhi also wished to be guided by that message. Like Gokhale, Gandhi was opposed to considering politics as a pastime. For him politics was the pathway to the service of God. But Gandhi's attachment to the concept of non-violence was far deeper and more extensive than that of Gokhale.

Gandhi pointed out that the lives of Buddha and Christ were inspired by the synthesis of active work and deep love. It is not correct to interpret Buddha and Christ<sup>31</sup> as immersed solely in contemplation and illumination because they had great interest in society. He wrote in an article entitled "Neither a Saint nor a Politician":

"What was the larger 'symbiosis' that Buddha and Christ preached? Gentleness and love. Buddha fearlessly carried the war into the enemy's camp and brought down on its knees an arrogant priesthood. Christ drove out the money-changers from the temple of Jerusalem and drew down curses from heaven upon the hypocrites and the Pharisees. Both were for intensely direct action. But even as Buddha and Christ chastized, they showed unmistakable gentleness and love behind every act of theirs."<sup>32</sup>

Gandhi claimed to adopt a religious attitude to political problems. He wrote :

"But though by disclaiming sainthood I disappoint the critic's expectations, I would have him give up his regrets by answering him that the politician in me has never dominated a single decision of mine, and if I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics encircle us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries. I wish therefore to wrestle with the snake, as I have been doing with more or less success con-

30 Like Gokhale, Bhagawan Das (Appendix to the *Outline Scheme of Swaraj* by C. R. Das and Bhagawan Das, p. 25) also refers to the spiritualization of politics by substituting the mercenary spirit with a missionary basis.

31 Illustrating the career of Jesus Christ as a practitioner of religion at an extended social level, Gandhi, "Religious Authority for Non-Cooperation", *Young India*, August 25, 1920, reproduced in *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, pp. 82-83, wrote : "Jesus, in my humble opinion, was a prince among politicians. The politics of his time consisted in securing the welfare of the people by teaching them not to be seduced by the trinkets of the priests and Pharisees. The latter then controlled and moulded the life of the people. Today the system of Government is so devised as to affect every department of our life. It threatens our very existence. If, therefore, we want to conserve the welfare of the nation, we must religiously interest ourselves in the doings of the governors, and exert a moral influence on them by insisting on their obeying the laws of morality."

32 M. K. Gandhi, "Neither a Saint nor a Politician", *Young India*, May 12, 1920, p. 2.

sciously since 1894, unconsciously, as I have now discovered, ever since, reaching years of discretion. Quite selfishly, as I wish to live in peace in the midst of a bellowing storm howling round me, I have been experimenting with myself and friends by introducing religion into politics. Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself.”<sup>33</sup>

A religious life, thus, means a purified and chastened life and such a life is bound to have immense social and political impact. Religions are meant to tame our savage nature. They aim to suppress the beastly in man and to enshrine his spiritual and moral will. The victory of Rama over Ravana is a symbol of the conquest of physical power by spiritual strength.<sup>34</sup> Thus Gandhi wanted the religious spirit to flourish which means a recovery of divine faith and the consequent purification of motives and conduct. It implies the cooperative adherence to the moral laws of God by the members of society.

Gandhi categorically said that he wanted to bring religion into politics.

“For me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and of humanity. I want to identify myself with everything that lives. In the language of the Gita, I want to live at peace with both friend and foe. So my patriotism is for me a stage on my journey to the land of eternal freedom and peace. Thus it will be seen that for me there are no politics devoid of religion. They subserve religion. Politics bereft of religion are a death-trap because they kill the soul.”<sup>35</sup>

Religion is based on the recognition of the superiority of moral vows. A religious life signifies the dedicated pursuit of these vows. Hence the incorporation of religion in politics means a progressive movement towards the continued and faithful practice of moral vows of truth and love. The central principle of Gandhian political philosophy is that the fundamental religious ethic common to all the great religions has to be made concrete in individual, social and

33 M. K. Gandhi, “Neither a Saint nor a Politician”, *Young India*, May 12, 1920, p. 2.

34 M. K. Gandhi, “The Doctrine of the Sword”, *Young India*, August 11, 1920.

35 M. K. Gandhi, “My Mission”, *Young India*, April 3, 1924, p. 112.

political life. It is, hence, opposed to regarding political action as the sphere of the "non-moral." Summarizing his reflections upon life in the last chapter of his *Autobiography* he wrote :

"To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."<sup>36</sup>

Gandhi also said : "Most religious men I have met are politicians in disguise : I, however, who wear the guise of a politician, am at heart a religious man." Gandhi as a religious soul constantly stressed the sanctity of the purified, truth-oriented inner light which should prevent men from doing in collective life what they would not do to themselves or their family. By the religious basis of politics Gandhi would, hence, mean the supremacy of the concept of the moral right of conscience in place of the divine right of rulers, princes and other ascendant groups. He would never sanction the supremacy of the ecclesiastical pontiffs, or the priests or the magicians. Thus his political theory is thoroughly different from that of Gregory VII or Boniface VIII. He is a prophet of the sanctification of the criteria of our action and is not a champion of any Church or a Sangha or a religious tribe.

It is this concept of religion as sanctified dynamic altruism, or Karmayoga, that he wanted to make the basis for the transformation of social and political action because he felt that no stable good could be rendered to society unless man purified his own conduct.<sup>37</sup> Religion provided the dynamic impetus to Gandhi's actions as a Karmayogi. His political actions and technics followed from his religious world-view. In his letter to Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald indicating his determination to "fast unto death" if separate electorate was provided for the Harijans, Mahatma Gandhi stated "... as a man of religion that I hold myself to be, I have no other course left open to me." He stated that his proposed fast would be undertaken in fulfilment of a definite philosophy of life that he had been following.<sup>38</sup>

36 Jawaharlal Nehru, "What is Religion?", *Autobiography*, pp. 377-80, rightly contends this view of Gandhi. Gandhi evidently is using the word religion in the sense of a moral code for personal purification. But those who plead for the exclusion of religion from politics are concerned with the doctrinal, ecclesiastical and ritualistic manifestations.

37 Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings*, p. 173 : "I do not believe that religion has nothing to do with politics. The latter, divorced from religion, is like a corpse only fit to be buried."

38 M. K. Gandhi's letter, August 18, 1932, written from a Yervada Central Prison.

That the religious ethics of piety, forgiveness, meekness, humility and universal tolerance should influence human action is the basic view of Gandhi. His views, thus, are a challenge to the arrogance of power politicians, some of whom claim infallibility for their views and actions. His aim is not to exalt the existing political structures and powers as being ordained and sanctified by God but to raise them to higher moral planes and thus to correct social and political inadequacies. He is not a champion of the divine right of the holders of political authority but stands for purifying even the structure of politics. Thus it is clear that by emphasizing the religious basis of individual social and political action Gandhi is not teaching any dogmatic, conservative or reactionary gospel.

Thus we see that when Gandhi talked of the religious basis of politics he was not preaching a going back to primitivism or Graeco-Roman paganism but emphasized a life of strenuous dynamic morally-oriented activity<sup>39</sup> in quest of the good of one's soul and mankind and the eradication of wrong and injustice. Gandhi treated political activity as a means of humanitarian service which, in its turn, was a technic of God-realization. Hence politics had to be seriously treated by being rooted in religious vows. He said :

"Religion is a thing not alien to us ; it has to be evolved out of us. It is always within us ; with some, consciously so, with others quite unconsciously. But it is always there. And whether we wake up this religious instinct in us through outside assistance or by inward growth, no matter how it is done, it has got to be done, if we want to do anything in the right manner, or to achieve anything that is going to persist."

Gandhi had taken to Satyagraha in South Africa as a matter of religious duty. He was championing resistance to wrong on religious grounds. His view is thus comparable to some extent to the French Monarchomacs. In his first letter to Tolstoy written on October 1, 1909 Gandhi had stated : "... a law which I and many other considered to be degrading and calculated to unman those to whom it was applicable. I felt that *submission to law of this nature was inconsistent with the spirit of true religion.*" (Our Italics)

Furthermore, Gandhi said : "Politics divorced from religion, has absolutely no meaning . . . Politics are a part of our being ; we ought to understand our national institutions. We may do this from our infancy . . . But we want also the steady light, the infallible light of religious faith."<sup>40</sup>

39 In an article entitled "Boycott of Courts and Schools", *Young India*, August 11, 1920, he stated : "*Real Politics are not a game.* The late Mr. Gokhale used to deplore that we had not gone beyond treating politics as a pastime. We have no notion as to how much the country has lost by reason of amateurs having managed its battles with the serious-minded, trained and whole time working bureaucracy." (Our Italics).

40 M. K. Gandhi's speech at Madras (1916), *Speeches and Writings* (3rd ed.) p. 162.

It is essential to repeat, however, that when Gandhi is referring to the religious bases of politics he is not preaching theocratic dogmatism. He does not have in his mind the possibility of a scholastic crusading politics because too often in the name of religion bloody battles have been fought. By his religious basis of politics one must not understand any replica of the regime of Solomon or of his father David<sup>41</sup> or any system like that of the theocracy of Tibet or the empire of the Incas. In the Hebrew Theocracy, God was regarded as the king of the Jews, the civil and religious authority were one and the same and the enemies of the Jews were regarded as the enemies of God. This theocratic pattern is absolutely different from the Gandhian scheme according to which no state religion is to be tolerated. Gandhi is not referring to the alliance between the temporal and the secular powers. Nor is he advocating the mingling of the sphere of Caesar and the sphere of Christ as was indicated in the doctrine of Caesaro-Papalism held by Justinian and Charlemagne. His theory is also different from Rousseau's Civil Religion. The fundamentals of Rousseau's Civil Religion and Gandhi's Ethical Religion can be thus represented :

CIVIL RELIGION (Rousseau)	ETHICAL RELIGION (Gandhi)
1. Belief in God	1. Belief in God
2. Belief in a future life of happiness for the good and punishment for the wicked	2. Belief in <i>Karman</i> and Transmigration (according to the balance of <i>papa</i> and <i>punya</i> )
3. Belief in the sanctity of the social contract and the law	3. Belief in the universal presence of a moral order and the efficacy of the eleven "great vows" ( <i>ekadasa mahavrata</i> )
4. No toleration for intolerance	4. Not only toleration but belief that all religions are equally true and entitled to respect.

Gandhi would never sanction any political exploitation of religion, because he was not concerned with the growth of organized churches or narrow-minded sects. His sole emphasis was on the development of loyalty to moral vows in a serious and dedicated sense. He had supported the Khilafat movement in 1920-1922 out of humanitarian and not out of considerations of political bargaining. Gandhi can in no sense be accused of communalism or revivalism. Therefore some of the critics who would like to level the charge of archaism or revivalism on Gandhi are doing him an injustice. Sometimes it is said that Gandhi, through the Non-Cooperation movement

41 Hence Spinoza says in his *Theologico-Political Tractatus*, Chapter XVII : "Everyone who fell away from religion ceased to be a citizen, and was, on that ground alone, accounted an enemy : those who died for religion, were held to have died for their country ; in fact between civil and religious law and right there was no distinction whatever."

fought to bolster the medieval and archaic institution of the Caliphate in Turkey. In so doing he provided support to the religious passions of the Indian Muslims. To be fair to Gandhi it must be stated that he supported the Khilafat movement because he felt that Britain had failed to redeem its pledges to the Turks.

Religion is not to be identified with any credal dogmatic theology. Gandhi never wanted the abdication of the rights of conscience at the altar of superstitions. Hence he never refrained from condemning the weaknesses of organized religions. He denounced untouchability in categorical terms although according to the Sanatanist pandits it is an organic part of Hinduism. He pleads for a cleansing of the structure of society which will result in the elimination of those gross superstitions and customs which have usurped the place of true religion.

According to Gandhi, the social and political plans for the future India should be constructed on the solid and substantial foundations of true religious consciousness, because religion, being synonymous with personal purification was also an immensely powerful social bond. "Religion binds man to God and man to man."<sup>42</sup> "Religions are not for separating men from one another, they are meant to bind them."<sup>43</sup> The non-violent society of the future which is almost the same as Panchayat Raj or Rama Raj will be based on religions. This means that it will be based not merely on territorial loyalty, constitutional allegiance and political attachment but will have the foundation of spiritual consensus. Religion in the sense of philanthropy, forbearances, justice, fraternity, peace and all-embracing love can alone be the basis of the continued existence of the world. No social structure can subsist on the basis of force, power or legal obligation alone. It must be rooted in the moral will of the people. Hence Gandhi said : "To try to root out religion itself from society is a wild-goose chase. And were such an attempt to succeed, it would mean the destruction of society." The quest of the religious consciousness in this socio-moral sense is the basis of a stable social and political structure.

The religious basis of politics as enunciated by Gandhi signifies the stress on moral values for political action. He aimed to free politics from its Machiavellian implications and like St. Augustine, wanted to base the commonwealth on justice. He wrote :

"My motive has been purely religious. . . I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind : and this I could not do unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I

<sup>42</sup> *Harijan*, May 4, 1940.

<sup>43</sup> *Harijan*, June 8, 1940.

do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a thing of ‘sound and fury, signifying nothing’.”

While in the political thought of Marsiglio and Hobbes, religion is subordinated to politics, in Gandhian political thought religious considerations have priority over political considerations. Thus like Plato, Cicero, Kant and Croce, Gandhi championed the priority of moral values in social and political life.

### **7. Superiority of Loyalty to God to Political Loyalty**

Gandhi believed in the superiority of spiritual authority. He definitely considered the eternal and divine laws of God to be superior to the positive laws of the commonwealth and the state. If a choice had to be made between loyalty to the commands of God as revealed through the intimations of the “inner voice” and loyalty to the laws of the state, Gandhi would unhesitatingly recommend obedience to the laws of God. The overwhelming majesty of the divine power has pre-eminence in Gandhi’s thinking. He emphatically declared in the speech at the inauguration of Banaras Hindu University : “If we trust and fear God, we shall have to fear no one, not Maharaja, not Viceroys, not the detectives, not even King George.”<sup>44</sup>

He urged that men should obey God rather than an aggressive imperialism. Loyalty to God whose commands are revealed in the promptings of conscience has a higher obligatory character than loyalty to the political superior. Like Seneca and St. Augustine, he taught the priority of obedience to God to political obedience.

The man who wants to follow a genuinely religious code will be ready to lay down his life for the vindication of the moral laws of God. He will never tolerate any kind of untruth, oppression and exploitation. The religious attitude demands struggle for the vindication of truth and divine laws and not acquiescence in the policy of the holders of authority. Gandhi states that to submit to an unjust law would be “sin”. It is also a sin to transgress the divine law. Explaining the divine law he says that it means that (a) one has to suffer pain before he can enjoy pleasure and (b) one’s true self-interest consists in the realization of good of all. Thus obedience to divine law involves the readiness for utter self-sacrifice.<sup>45</sup> Hence Gandhi was deadly opposed to the conservative use of religion for the support of obsolete social customs and irrational political authority. Religion is never to be made an adjunct of social and political power. Hence Gandhi wrote : “It was a sign of religious atrophy to sustain an unjust government that supported an injustice by resorting to untruth and camouflage.” Thus Gandhi championed the concept of abso-

44 M. K. Gandhi, “Hindu University Speech”, *To the Students* (Hingorani ed.), pp. 43-44.

45 M. K. Gandhi, “Divine Law”, *Collected Works*, Vol. VII, pp. 121-23.

lute allegiance to the laws of God which implies the subordination of the political and social loyalties to loyalty to God.<sup>46</sup> His concept of loyalty to God reminds one of the Christian theory of "divided allegiance." The concept of undivided allegiance to the political superior or the omnipotent sovereign is thoroughly unknown to Gandhism.

The theory of divided allegiance<sup>47</sup> implying the superiority of the obligation to obey God and the intimations of inner conscience,<sup>48</sup> to political obedience, is a monumental contribution of Gandhi to political philosophy. He regarded fearlessness as the key to Swaraj and stated that a man who realizes his humanity is not afraid of any law except the laws of God. His stress on the religious concept of resistance to unjustified coercive political authority which is a logical corollary to the concept of divided loyalty can act as a great deterrent to the emergence of any totalitarian system because Satyagraha based upon the autonomy of moral will is bound to be an antidote to all types of political tyranny.

There is a far greater element of radicalism in Gandhi than in the old Hindu political writers like Bhismā, Kautilya and Manu. In Gandhi's political thought loyalty to the supreme moral laws of God takes precedence over loyalty to any unjustified imperialistic system. In the political thought of Manu and Sukracharya, on the other hand, an attempt was made to invest the holders of political authority with a religious halo. They pleaded for the deification of the king. But the political thought of Gandhi makes a radical departure from their standpoint because it never ascribes a theological foundation to political governance.

It is absolutely wrong to say that this concept of twofold loyalty as implied in Gandhi's views would apply only when India had been under British imperialism and is inapplicable in a democratic set up. To say so is a vulgarization of Gandhism. To Gandhi truth was perennially uppermost, regardless of the external structure of the state where it had to have its social or political application.

#### **8. Secularism and Politics**

Gandhi was a man of profound religious convictions and wanted to incorporate moral values, which are the essence of religion, into politics. But although he wanted to strengthen the religious bases of politics it was in a strictly moral sense. He would not tolerate any privilege to any particular religious group or sect, neither

<sup>46</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings* (3rd ed.), p. 380.

<sup>47</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Collected Works*, Vol. VII, p. 470, says that while the bodies of men may be under the power of the state to be imprisoned or deported, "their minds, their wills and their souls must ever remain free." This conclusion follows from the acceptance of God. He also says that citizenship does not mean "blind obedience to the laws imposed on him."

<sup>48</sup> M. K. Gandhi, "Foreign Policy", *Young India*, October 20, 1921 : "Loyalty to the country is always subordinate to loyalty to God."

would he discriminate against any group. He would also certainly disfavour an attempt by the state to make men religious in the sense of forcing them to give loyalty to certain creeds and dogmas. He rejected the concept of coercion in the field of religion and earnestly pleaded for "leaving every individual to follow that form of religion which best appealed to him without any interference from the State."<sup>49</sup> He categorically wanted that "the state should undoubtedly be secular."<sup>50</sup> Neither did he accept the concept of State religion. He wrote :

"He did not believe in State religion even though the whole community had one religion. The State interference would probably always be unwelcome. Religion was purely a personal matter. There were in reality as many religions as minds. Each mind had a different conception of God from that of the other. He was also opposed to State aid partly or wholly to religious bodies. For he knew that an institution or group, which did not manage to finance its own religious teachings, was a stranger to true religion. This did not mean that the State Schools would not give ethical teachings. The fundamental ethics were common to all religions."<sup>51</sup>

Gandhi accepted the imparting of the teaching of the fundamental moral norms and ideals common to all religions, in educational establishments run or subsidized by the State.<sup>52</sup> He had sponsored such a programme for the Gujarat Vidyapitha which, however, was a private institution. But certainly, he was opposed to the inculcation of denominational and sectarian religious teachings in state institutions. He wrote :

"I do not believe that the State can concern itself or cope with religious education. I believe that religious education must be the sole concern of religious associations. Do not mix up religion and ethics. I believe that fundamental ethics is common to all religions. Teaching of fundamental ethics is undoubtedly a function of the State. By religion I do not have in mind fundamental ethics but what goes by the name of denominationalism. We have suffered enough from State-aided religion and a State Church. A society or a group, which depends partly or wholly on State aid for the existence of its religion, does not deserve or, better still, does not have

49 *Harijan*, November 23, 1947.

50 *Harijan*, August 24, 1947 (See p. 74 of *Sarvodaya* by Gandhi.)

51 *Harijan*, March 16, 1947.

52 In the Wardha Scheme of Education, however, the teaching of religions was left out as M. Gandhi said : "because we are afraid that religions as they are taught and practised today lead to conflict rather than unity."—Quoted in R. Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India* (Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 191.

any religion worth the name. I do not need to give any illustrations in support of this truth obvious as it is to me."<sup>53</sup> Thus it is clear that Gandhi regarded religion as a matter of private judgment. The organized agencies of the state were not to meddle with the religious affairs of the people. Hence he would not agree to the inculcation of religious dogmas by the state.

Gandhi always stressed the necessity of holiness of living and hence he did not relish conversion and proselytism. It is evident that he would have condemned conversion if impelled by political considerations. He felt that all religions were true but all contained some inadequacies because the religious truths were promulgated by teachers, who, being human beings, were imperfect.

<sup>53</sup> *Harijan*, March 23, 1947.

# 6

## ETHICS AND POLITICS IN GANDHIAN THOUGHT

### 1. Ethical Absolutism

(a) *Metaphysical Idealism and Ethical Absolutism.* Gandhi accepted metaphysical idealism but simultaneously he adhered to the doctrine of the absolutism of ethical values. Ethical Absolutism signifies that moral norms are absolute and hence objective and eternal. They are not the imaginations of human beings and are completely removed from the canons of expediency and opportunism. According to Gandhi, the eleven "great vows" could finally be reduced to only two—truth and non-violence. Thus the ethical philosophy of Gandhism is based on the concepts of the unity of existence and universal love. It has its metaphysical roots in the famous Mantra of the *Yajurveda* : "*Isavasyamidam sarvam*"—the entire universe is permeated by the supreme omnipresent God. This ontological conception of the spiritual unity of existence and the immanence of the divine absolute in all beings necessarily implies the moral values of truth, non-violence and justice. It would stress universal love as the only law of life and seeks to replace individual egoism by orientation to common good. Hence, according to Gandhi, socialism, even communism, is implicit in this Mantra.<sup>1</sup> But, unlike some of the schools of modern socialism and communism, Gandhism refused to be satisfied with the progress and well-being only of a class or a nation. It advocates the good or Hita and the emancipation of all living beings or Sarvabhutahita in the language of the *Gita*. Hence it recognizes a perpetual fight against untruth and cruelty to human beings and animals.

The Gandhian theory of ethical absolutism can also be traced to the Vedic concept of the Rita or the doctrine that there are all-encompassing cosmic and moral ordinances which govern both men and gods. Buddha also had deep and profound faith in the existence of a universal moral order. The Hindu philosopher Patanjali also accepted that the cardinal concepts of ethics (the five Yama and the five Niyama) were beyond the relativism of space and time. Gandhi accepts these notions and insights of ancient Indian metaphysics and

1 *Harijan*, February 2, 1937.

ethics. His own experiences in life also convinced him of the efficacy of the moral norms and he became an absolute believer in the timeless values of truth, non-violence, chastity, non-accumulation and non-stealing. These values were to govern total human action.

Gandhi believed in the sanctity of eleven great vows or *Mahavratas*. These are explained below :

(i) *Satya*.—It signifies absolute adherence to the supreme truth and reality which is God. Gandhi taught the conquest of desires and passions and the purification of impulses as the path to the realization of the universal Truth.

(ii) *Ahimsa*.—It means not only non-hatred and non-violence at all levels and in relation to all living creatures but the positive and absolute law of creative love.<sup>2</sup> Being a believer in the majesty and goodness of the Spirit, Gandhi categorically declared : "Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed." He stated that he literally believed in Patanjali's aphorism that in the presence of non-violence hatred will cease.

(iii) *Brahmacharya*.—It implies complete restraint over all sense-organs and turning them towards *Brahman*. It is much more than physical continence.

(iv) *Asvada*.—Control of the palate.

(v) *Asteya*.—Non-stealing.

(vi) *Aparigraha*.—Non-accumulation. One should not possess anything which is not absolutely essential.

(vii) *Abhayam*.—Fearlessness. A coward can never be the true devotee of God. One who treads the path of God must be prepared to sacrifice everything including his own life. "There is hope for a violent man to become non-violent. There is no such hope for the impotent."<sup>3</sup> Gandhi categorically stated : "I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence I would advise violence."<sup>4</sup>

He was convinced that one could not pursue the path of true religion without being ready for self-immolation. He used to quote the lines of Pritamdas :

"The pathway of the Lord can only  
be trodden by heroic souls ;  
The laggards shrink from it.

The diver goes deep beneath the ocean  
to find the pearls of great price."<sup>5</sup>

अहिंसाप्रतिष्ठायां तत्सन्धिवैरत्यागः । (II/35). Commenting on this *Sutra*, Ramananda says : "अहिंसकस्य……सन्धिवै स्वभाव विरन्दिनामहि—न कुलादीनामपि वैरत्यागः भवति ।"

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, October 21, 1939.

<sup>4</sup> *Young India*, August 11, 1920.

<sup>5</sup> *Harijan*, March 11, 1939.

(viii) *Swadeshi*.—It means not only the use of articles produced in one's own country but also a desire to serve one's immediate neighbourhood. According to Gandhi, Swadeshi had deep and far-reaching application. He wrote :

"After much thinking I have arrived at a definition of *swadeshi* that perhaps best illustrates my meaning : *Swadeshi* is that spirit within us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings, to the exclusion of the more remote. 'Thus (1) in the matter of religion I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion.....If I find my religion defective, I should serve by purging it of its defects. (2) In the domain of politics I should make use of the indigenous institutions, and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. (3) In the field of economics I should use only those things that are produced by my immediate neighbours, and serve those industries by making them efficient'."

With his emphasis on *Swadeshi* Gandhi is, necessarily, opposed to the imperialist state.

(ix) *Kayika Srama or Bread labour*.—It implies that everybody must do some productive manual work everyday. Gandhi wrote : "God created man to work for his food and said that those who ate without work were thieves."<sup>6</sup> This law was first stressed by the Russian peasant writer T. M. Bondaref and was popularized by Tolstoy. This law eliminates the so-called distinction between those who live by intellectual labour and those who live by manual labour.

(x) *Sarvadharma samabhava*.—It means not merely the negative concept of the toleration of the religions of other people, but a genuine reverence for all religions and their scriptures and prophets.

(xi) *Asprishyata niwarana*.—The removal of untouchability. Gandhi said : "Let us not deny God by denying to a fifth of our race the right of association on an equal footing."<sup>7</sup>

The first five categories in this list of eleven great vows are the same as the five *Yamas* of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*. *Abhayam* is the first item in the "*Daivi Sampatti*" (divine attributes) outlined in the Bhagavadgita in the sixteenth chapter. *Swadeshi*, *Sarvadharma-samabhava* and *Asprishyata niwarana* are more sociological and economic in character and are relevant to the contemporary situation in India. It is possible that Gandhi's instinctive feeling of respect for all religions might have been strengthened by his studies of theosophical books and Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*. The concept of bread labour has a Russian origin. Thus it is clear that if some of the categories in the eleven "great vows" contain eternal principles like truth and non-violence, some have a more immediate reference to the actual Indian situation.

6 *Young India*, October 13, 1921.

7 *Young India*, October 6, 1921.

The devotee of these *Mahavratas* will stand for safeguarding the criterion of truth because like Vyasa in the Mahabharata and like Bhartrihari, he would thoroughly adhere to the view that *Dharma* is eternal, while worldly joys and sorrows, favours and frowns are temporary. *Dharma*, according to Gandhi, means not only conventional creed or ritualistic ceremonialism, but is based on the acceptance of a primordial moral order (*Rita* and *Satya*) in the world. Hence, for example, he regarded *Ahimsa* as *Parama Dharma* or ultimate basis of obligation. Gandhi advocates a dynamic morality based on these eleven "great vows". They are based on the sacredness and autonomy of conscience against the deadening weight of conservative traditions, social inertia and obscurantist norms which are without foundations in sound logic and reason and represent only a closed and static morality and sometimes may even be the ideological supports of the ascendant classes. Hence Gandhi as a man of conscience, with his deep devotion to truth and non-violence, appeared on the historical stage as a great rebel. He revolted in the name of truth whenever the *status quo* offered a challenge to his conscience. A devotee of the "great vows" could not remain confined to the safe retreats of a sanctuary when the children of God were being tyrannized over. He would immediately begin the battle of truth. The firm adherence to these vows makes one the permanent soldier of God and the perpetual crusader for truth.<sup>8</sup> Hence Gandhi's life represents the protest of moral reason whose regulative principles are categorized in these eleven *Mahavratas* against unfounded scriptural dogmas, theological and ecclesiastical pretensions, established vested interests and the ever-growing claims of the omnipotent imperialistic and totalitarian Leviathan to impose norms of action and conduct on the individual.

(b) *Idealism, Ethical Absolutism and Ethical Intuitionism.* Gandhi may be regarded an Ethical Idealist in the following senses :

(i) He regards that human life is to be guided by a set of principles (Vows) or *Vratas*.

(ii) He regards that these universal principles have more worth than temporary fancies or arbitrary desires.

(iii) He believes that moral considerations are superior to material advantages.

(iv) He thinks that through the life of *Karmayoga* freedom (*Moksha*) can be won.

Gandhi's ethical idealism signifies a slow transcendence of the theory of external obligations and sanctions and puts stress upon the realization of the self-constraining power of inward virtue. Genuine morality does not consist in being satisfied with the traditional and

<sup>8</sup> The "eleven vows" were to be daily repeated twice—at the time of rising and at the time of retiring. This repetition was meant to strengthen one's resolution. Said Gandhi, "Vows are to the weak mind and soul what tonics are to the weak body." But the repetition has to be not mechanical but proceed from the heart.

conventional canons but it means a deepening of the innermost concern for the good of all. Gandhi was not content to teach the traditional morality of faithful adherence to historical conventions. Gandhism goes far beyond traditionalism and teaches the deepening and inwardization of moral life, because Gandhi stood for the supremacy of inner conscience (*Antaratman*). No power in the world and no intellectual jugglery can eliminate the existence of the *Atman* and hence Gandhi always followed in his life the dictates of the inner voice. Like Dayananda, Gandhi would consider the promptings of the conscience as intimations from God. Human conscience or the concealed Daemon, constantly referred to by Socrates, has to provide the decisive norms of action in situations of moral stress and conflict. A progressive moral cleansing of the human being is essential for obtaining the right canons and standards of action through the revelation of the commands of conscience.

Gandhi wanted a holy communion between the supersensible divine being and the inner conscience. His philosophy of ethical intuitionism and ethical absolutism starts from his conception of the primacy of the internal light. The world is pervaded by the Spirit and man should act in the constant internal awareness of the presence of God. Thus alone can he attain purity and nobility and final liberation.

I have regarded Gandhi as an ethical intuitionist because—

(i) According to him the disciplined conscience (*Antaratman* and *Vyavasayatmika Buddhi*) provides certain insight into the correctness, goodness and obligatoriness of actions ;

(ii) Gandhi is concerned not merely with the consequences following from a course of action but also and primarily with the purity of the guiding motives.

The three positions attributed to Gandhi in this book—ethical absolutism, ethical idealism and ethical intuitionism—are complementary.

## **2. Political Implications of Ethical Absolutism, Idealism and Intuitionism**

Gandhi's fundamental contribution to political philosophy is his idea of the moralization of social and political action by incorporating into society and politics the values of love and justice in place of the craving for power, haughtiness and glory. In spite of occasional differences of opinion with his most trusted lieutenants, as for example in 1941 and 1947-48, Gandhi was resolute in his firm upholding of the absolutism of *Ahimsa*. He was opposed to the reduction of politics to the game of cynical manipulation based on fraud, deceit, force and self-interest. He considered politics as not the art of getting power and prestige but as the pathway to social service. Hence he wants to raise it to a dignified, exalted and moralized plane. He would like politics to be made a branch of

ethics and thus become an art which should be used for social good and eventually as an instrument in the cosmic and spiritual self-awareness of man. Politics is not to remain the way of successful manipulation or of entrance into the councils or of the conquest of power. According to Gandhi, the canons of social and political action should be sought in the innate and fundamental goodness of man and all action should spring from the virtuous disposition of the human soul. Since the universe is spiritual and organic, there is no place in Gandhian ethics for the distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding virtues. Although virtues arise in the individual disposition to self-perfection, all of them have social, political and even cosmic relevance.

The supreme concept of God as truth necessarily implies the prevalence of an omnipotent moral governance of the world. Hence all types of group and political action should be based upon the acceptance of the primacy and supremacy of the divine providence and its inexorable moral law. Dependence upon God results in the growth of moral goodness and righteousness. In the supreme eternity of his being and awareness, God is the reality to which human beings are finally responsible for their individual and collective actions, and hence there should be no separation between the criteria of moral and political obligations.

Furthermore, the belief in God is also the guarantee for the equalitarian orientation of human action. Hence the demands of equalitarian morality should provide the norms for the actions of men in all walks of life.

Gandhi honestly believed that social and political life could be substantially improved if the spiritual power of the *Atman* or the human spirit, would be brought to bear on them. Hence although he was bitterly opposed to several aspects of modern politics and civilization, he did not despair of them. He felt that the world could be perfected if men become determined to live according to moral values. The trends of society and politics could be changed if even only a few people become determined not to deviate from the path of truth. Thus the adherence to self-purification, he regarded not only as an aid to the realization of God but also the most solid technic for bringing about social and political betterment.

He would never sanction the intellectual sophistries practised in the name of the value-neutrality of the social sciences. He was painfully conscious of the fact that the educated classes, at times, practised the art of dialectic to support the life of immoral action. Gandhi, on the other hand, accepted that the supreme element in human existence is not intellectual argumentation or rational substantiation of propositions but the moral cleansing of life and conduct. Hence Gandhi was critical of rationalism. He felt that man's moral character is protected not by reason but by *Shraddha* and faith in God. He firmly held that for the regeneration of social and political exis-

tence, there was the need of internal purification through the dedicated pursuit of the "great vows". Hence, in Gandhi, the dominant theme is not dialectical comprehension and appeal to the rational faculty but the authenticity of pure and holy life because moral growth and transformation of personality are essential for social and political perfection. Concurrently, social and political action performed in the spirit of non-concern for consequences (*Anasakti*) and as a part of *Lokasamgraha* has an ennobling and purifying effect on man's character.

### 3. Means and Ends in Gandhian Ethics and Politics

Like Gautama Buddha, Gandhi was an ethical absolutist and would not make any compromise with what he regarded as essential and fundamental moral principles. He refused to exalt the cult of expediency. He would have held that the highest morality is the highest expediency. The principle of the sacrosanct character of human conscience and the incorporation of its commands in the structure of society and polities necessarily implies the purification of means. Gandhi always claimed to adhere to the commands of inner conscience. But he claimed no infallibility for himself and was self-conscious and humble not to be deluded by the appellation of "Mahatma". He confessed having made Himalayan blunders but never was he consciously guilty of any compromise with the purity of means.

In a spiritual organic universe, good ends cannot be achieved by evil methods. Hence Gandhi stressed the nobility of technics for the realization of the goals set by him. Both in South Africa and India, he stressed the purity of means for the realization of his political objectives. He was an advocate of the principle of pure *Karma*. Only by noble actions can a blissful goal be realized. Gandhi would never subscribe to any policy and action that could lead to a compromise with truth because, to him, loyalty to truth is the supreme consideration. He was sanguine that political action could be made to conform to the ultimate values of the spirit. He also said : "And where the means are clean, there God is undoubtedly present with his blessings." His religious personality is apparent in his emphasis on purity of means.

Gandhi emphasized the purification of human action through the implementation of the concept of purity of means emphasized by the old religious prophets. He wrote : "Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so *Ahimsa* is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. When once we have grasped this point, final victory is beyond

M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, (1940) : "I am an erring mortal like you. I have never in my dream thought that I was a Mahatma and others were *Alpatma*. We are all equal before our maker. I am but a poor mortal. I believe in my experiments and in my uttermost sincerity."

question.”<sup>10</sup> According to him, what cannot be justified by inner human conscience cannot be justified on grounds political and patriotic. Nationalist political leaders may think that in the interests of the country some compromise with truth can be permitted. But Gandhi would never sanction such practice and would say that the politician and the statesman should not try to defend the national interests of the country by transgressing the canons of morality and truth, because even behind social and political action there should be the guiding force of the pure human spirit. He accepts, thus, the constraining character of inner obligation and purity of means, and was firm in his belief that only morally justifiable action can be regarded as the correct course of action.

He said : “For me, it is enough to know the means ; means and ends are convertible terms in my philosophy of life.” But he would not rest content only with the stress on purity of means. He would go even a step further because, for himself, he prescribed not only purity of ends and purity of means but also purity of inner motives and intentions. Thus he sought to prescribe a holy trinity of noble ends, pure means and chastened intentions.

Amidst a perplexed, bewildered and chaotic world, Gandhi has done a great service to political philosophy by stressing the simple but profound norm of the purity of means. Plato also accepts an immanent spiritual teleology in the world-process but even he does not put as much emphasis on the purity of means as Gandhi. Under the guise of serving the masses, modern totalitarianism has unleashed a regime of unprecedented barbarism and ferocity. This experience makes necessary that ignoble means must be renounced even for the realization of allegedly good and laudable goals.

There is also great realism in the Gandhian stress on the nobility of means to the extent that if one takes care of the means, good consequences are bound to emerge.

But it would be wrong, however, to become unmindful of the goals and the objectives. The final aim has a great relevance to the scheme for organizing man’s energies. One has not only to choose between different means but the choice of and the establishment of priority between goals is also equally significant a task.

#### **4. Gandhian Ethics and Benthamite Utilitarianism**

Gandhi regarded the cardinal moral values of truth and non-violence as being permanently obligatory on all human beings without regard to the relative distinctions of time and space. He was firmly opposed to the lowering of the standard for suiting personal convenience. Being a metaphysical idealist he pleaded for the good of all, and like Buddha, he also was concerned with the good of all living beings. Literally Sarvodaya means the good of all living beings and thus it has almost the same meaning as the concept of *Sarva-*

10 M. K. Gandhi, “Ahimsa or Love”, *From Yervada Mandir*, (Navajivan, 1957, 4th impression, 1st impression of 1932), p. 9.

*bhutahita* or the good of all living beings advocated in the Bhagavadgita.

Since Gandhi was an ethical absolutist, he regarded the Benthamite<sup>11</sup> formula of the greatest good of the greatest number as imperfect and inadequate. He wrote :

"The fact is that a votary of *ahimsa* cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula. He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the ideal. He will, therefore, be willing to die so that the others may live. He will serve himself with the rest, by himself dying. The greatest good of all inevitably includes the good of the greater number, and therefore he and the utilitarian will converge at many points in their career but there does come a time when they must part company, and even work in opposite directions. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself. The absolutist will even sacrifice himself. The absolutist's sphere of destruction will be always the narrowest possible. The utilitarian's has no limit. Judged by the standard of non-violence, the late war was wholly wrong. Judged by the utilitarian standard, each party has justified it according to its idea of utility. Even the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre was justified by its perpetrators on the grounds of utility. And precisely on the same ground the anarchist justifies his assassinations. But none of these acts can possibly be justified on the greatest-good-of-all principle."

The Gandhian ethics of Sarvodaya has a holistic and universalistic orientation, and it does not exclude the good of any being from its purview. Its constant preoccupation is with the minimization of the antagonism between the self and the other.

The stress on the regeneration of human motives further differentiates Gandhism from Benthamism. Gandhi, as pointed out earlier, is always a believer in the purification of human motivation. He is not concerned merely with the external consequences. The motive prompting an act has also to be good and noble. Even though the formal structure of the actions of two individuals may be the same, the difference in the inner propulsive motivation would create a great change. Gandhi, hence, differs from the philosophical Radicals and utilitarians like John Stuart Mill in putting far greater emphasis on the purification of human motivations. According to Gandhi, it is not possible to pursue a correct course of action without control over one's will and thought. This stress on fundamental motivational purification further differentiates the Gandhian theory of Sarvodaya from that of Benthamite utilitarianism.

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11 A friend of Gandhi in London began to read to him Bentham's *Theory of Utility* to convince him (the student Gandhi) of the merits of meat-diet. But Gandhi soon found the language of the book to be too difficult for him. From the title, it does not appear to be clear to which specific book of Bentham is Gandhi making a reference. Bentham's books are entitled, *Principles of Morals and Legislation* and *Theory of Legislation*.

## 7

## GANDHI'S THEORY OF CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE

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### 1. Gandhi's Theory of "True Civilization" or Moral Civilization

Gandhi had a moral approach to the problems of the nature and growth of civilization because he accepted a spiritual interpretation of the universe and history. He wrote : "Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty."<sup>1</sup> Thus Gandhi equated the development and evolution of civilization with the progress in duty-oriented moral values. Moral growth, according to him, depends upon the restraint of the lower ego. Hence a true civilization has to point out to man the way of inner progress and moral cleansing and sanctification. A civilization without ethics would be sterile and doomed to destruction. This ethical approach to civilization is the central element in Gandhi's analysis and prognosis of our critical and chaotic epoch.

Gandhi did not confine civilization only to the external and technological constructions for a social, civilized and easy living. He does not make any sharp analytical distinction between "civilization" and "culture" as Danilevsky, Spengler or Berdyaev do, but almost uses them interchangeably<sup>2</sup> like Schweitzer.

1 M. K. Gandhi, *Hind-Swaraj*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, Reprint of 1958), p. 61.

2 M. K. Gandhi, "Advice to Students", (April 27, 1915), *Speeches and Writings*, (3rd ed.), pp. 124-25 : "I am, and I have been, a determined opponent of modern civilization. I want you to turn your eyes today upon what is going on in Europe, and if you have come to the conclusion that Europe is today groaning under the heels of that modern civilization, then, you and your elders will have to think twice before you emulate that civilization in our Motherland. But I have been told : 'How can we help it seeing that our Rulers bring that culture to our Motherland?' Do not make any mistake about it. I do not, for one moment, believe that it is for our Rulers to bring that culture to you, unless you are prepared to accept it and if it be that the Rulers bring that culture before us, I think that we have forces for ourselves to enable us to reject that culture without having to reject the Rulers themselves."

This passage convincingly shows the use of the two concepts, culture and civilization, synonymously.

Moral progress, in the Gandhian philosophy of civilization, meant not only conquests in the field of self-purification but it emphatically connoted a sense of dynamic identification with the exploited, down-trodden, suppressed and humiliated people. No civilization, according to him, was worth while unless it provided the criteria and opportunities for the fullest development of the humblest of citizens. Hence Gandhi was persistently absorbed in humanitarian service and as an advocate of moral civilization he claimed to be only "a humble servant of India and humanity." He wanted to serve the world through serving the Indian masses.

Gandhi, as a believer in the ethical foundations of civilization, was the prophet of "true civilization". On the basis of Gandhian literature, three basic principles of a "true civilization" may be pointed out although Gandhi, himself, has not attempted any such theoretical systematization.

(i) First, there should be a quest for Truth as Reality in place of external illusory charms and fascinations. It is true that Gandhi was a devout Vaishnava, and, unlike the subjective idealists, did not accept that the world was only a mirage or a false delusion or an illusion. But, nonetheless, compared to God, the world and its phenomena and its multiple celebrations were only subordinately real. Hence, as a believer in God, he had only a subsidiary regard for phenomenal attractions and accumulation of worldly commodities. He would hold that civilization signified that man should transcend the demands and satisfactions of the body and the senses, and should make a search for the supreme Truth. Gandhi had a repugnance for the superficial attempt to find satisfactions in external embellishments of the flesh. He felt, to the contrary, the urgency of the quest of the immanent, infinite and eternal God.

The prophets of materialism believe in the power of reason to build a new society based on the maximization of commodities. Gandhi, as a spiritualist, on the other hand, accepted the limited potency of reason. Reason could not reveal all the knowledge about the Spirit and man, and hence he stood for piety, faith in God and a spirit of charity and fellowship. It is evident that a believer in God would not accept the thesis that a civilization could be based only on reason.

(ii) Secondly, in the Gandhian philosophy of civilization one finds a quest for *simplicity*.<sup>3</sup> He said :

"We may not barter away our ancient simplicity for anything on this earth. Now, you will perhaps understand my deter-

<sup>3</sup> E. Stanley Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 160, says that the spirit embodied in Gandhi stands for four things :

- (i) Sincerity,
- (ii) Simplicity,
- (iii) Self-suffering, and
- (iv) Soul-force

mined opposition to the modern rush, the hypnotic dazzle that seems almost to overcome us and overtake us ; and that is coming to us with such violent force from the West.”<sup>4</sup>

Simplicity as a criterion of civilization means a condemnation of luxury. Gandhi accepted the purifying power of voluntary poverty and felt that spiritual and moral freedom depends not upon vain accumulation of commodities of comforts but upon the cultivation of simplicity. According to Gandhi, engrossment in vanities, luxuries and wealth is degrading and demoralizing. He wrote :

“Rome suffered a moral fall when it attained high material affluence. So did Egypt and so perhaps most countries of which we have any historical record. The descendants and kinsmen of the royal and divine Krishna too fell when they were rolling in riches.”<sup>5</sup>

Hence he wanted the substitution of extravagance by care for the social good, and his personal life showed a deliberate indifference to the solicitations of pleasure, material wealth and comforts, and a readiness to sacrifice one’s everything for the good of all.<sup>6</sup>

Simplicity follows naturally as a concomitant of devotion to one’s duty in quest of reality. If there is the rigid adherence to one’s moral and social duties then because of the constant mental presence of the sense of the good of all and of the moral norm of self-determination of conduct by spiritual values, simplicity does not seem painful but becomes, instead, a matter of joy and pleasure. Gandhi’s adherence to the vow of simplicity amounted to the rejection of sophistication, ostentation, involved complications and intricacies.

Gandhi, certainly, urged a quest for simplicity but this simplicity did not arise out of ignorance and primitivism, but was the consequence of the natural openness, sincerity and outspokenness of a man striving after the perfection of his motivation and conduct.<sup>7</sup> When man is absorbed in moral quest, he finds mere show and external equipments and apparatus to be inadequate. He begins to manifest simplicity all-round—in his life, tastes, actions and behaviour. Furthermore, genuine simplicity is a principle of spiritual aesthetics and it prevents a man from taking an unmannerly, awkward and clumsy step. It means the absence of crudeness and commonplace

4 M. K. Gandhi's address at the Jaffna Students' Congress, Nov. 26, 1927.

5 M. K. Gandhi's lecture at Allahabad, December 22, 1916, *Speeches and Writings*, p. 184.

6 Gandhi visualized the possibility of a Kisan prime minister for India who “would live in a mud hut, sleep under the sky and work on the land during the day, whenever he was free.”—(Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, VIII, p. 203).

7 M. K. Gandhi, *Collected Works*, X, 279, refers to the Spencerian concept of evolution from the simple to the complex, but evidently he would not regard it as a true sign of civilization. He, to the contrary, felt that the simple life was better than the complex. He was of the opinion that, in ancient civilization, people looked “upwards to heaven”, but now they look “downwards to the earth.”

coarseness into which civilization has, sometimes, a tendency to degenerate. The sure and certain touch of the Spirit has to be manifested in all departments and sectors of life, and simplicity should express the natural candour of the soul and is not to be a masquerade for hypocrisy.<sup>8</sup>

Since Gandhi believed in simplicity, he wanted to raise the standard of living of the Indians only to a limited and moderate extent. He was opposed to the possession of commodities for comforts on moral and economic grounds. Explaining the concept of *Aparigraha* (non-possession) he wrote :

"Perfect fulfilment of the ideal of non-possession requires, that man should, like the birds, have no roof over his head, no clothing and no stock of food for the morrow. He will indeed need his daily bread, but it will be God's business, and not his, to provide it. Only the fewest possible, if any at all, can reach this ideal. We ordinary seekers may not be repelled by the seeming impossibility. But we must keep the ideal constantly in view, and in the light thereof, critically examine our possessions, and try to reduce them. Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service."<sup>9</sup>

The propensity to accumulate commodities cramps the soul and degenerates into the morbid desire to make a fetish of external goods of life. The luxury of the ascendant classes therefore makes them morally depraved. The monopolization of the things needed by all, by a few men at the top, is unjust. Moreover, accumulation is condemnable because it is not possible to be practised by all. Accumulation by a few amounts to the dispossession of the many. Simplicity, on the other hand, can be universalized. Hence Gandhi simultaneously glorified voluntary poverty while he was trying to improve the living conditions of the Indian farmers and workers. His voluntary acceptance of poverty amounted to an emotional identification with the humble folk. This, indirectly, provided a healthy counter-balance to the philistinism of the pseudo-westernized Indian middle-class which despised the people in the lower ladders of the socio-economic strata.

Gandhi said : "Simplicity is the essence of universality."<sup>10</sup> His stress on simplicity was both a maxim for inner moral growth as well as a principle of civilization. It challenged the very bases and assump-

8 Gandhi's spirit of utter simplicity and devout humility is revealed in his famous speeches at the Federal Structure Sub-committee and at the plenary session of the Round Table Conference of 1931.

9 M. K. Gandhi, *From Yervada Mandira*, p. 24.

10 *Harijan*, April 9, 1946.

tions of modern diplomacy, imperialistic rivalries, exploitation and property-accumulation which are based upon the unhealthy exaltation of the drive for possessiveness.

(iii) Gandhi endeavoured to be a whole man<sup>11</sup> and stood for the synthesis of spiritual and temporal elements.<sup>12</sup> He, certainly, was a saint and a prophet but his interest in social and economic justice, political liberty and human unity was also profound and continued till the end. He was not a recluse refusing to do anything with the world. Hence a quest for compromise or reconciliation (*Samanyava*) or *harmonious integration* is the third principle of the Gandhian philosophy and sociology of civilization. Gandhi pleaded for salutary and wholesome synthesis and co-ordination of the demands of the soul and the body. He did not reject the claims of the physical self. He was extremely careful about his diet and his physical exercise. He was absolutely punctual and regular in his daily walks. He was a lean man but during the Zulu Rebellion (June-July, 1906) he did walk twice or thrice even forty miles a day. He was small in stature but was strong. By having fasted several times for three weeks at a stretch, he demonstrated the solid strength of his body. He advocated the ancient exercise of *Pranayama*. He believed in nature cure. He did not favour unproductive athletic exercises, but nonetheless, he always said that the Satyagrahis must be vigorous and hardy. He stressed Brahmacharya for the conservation of moral and physical strength and vitality. He wanted the raising of the body and not its rejection because he held : "Man's body is the temple of God." Hence his spirit was wholly different from those of the medieval ascetics like St. Teresa who glorified punishment of the body as a preparation for mystic illumination. Instead of the negative concept of self-torture, he stressed proper body culture. Hence integration or successful reconciliation between the soul and the body can be regarded as the third basic principle in Gandhi's philosophy of culture and civilization.<sup>13</sup> His personal life was an example of this concept of harmony and integration. It will not be correct to regard him as a prophet of world-and-life-negation. He attempted to synthesize inner prayer and social action, political leadership and God-realization. Hence he stood for balancing the demands of the Spirit and the claims of the world. To a compartmentalized and fragmen-

11 C. H. Keyserling, "Gandhi's Place in World History", in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *M. Gandhi*, p. 184.

12 M. K. Gandhi, "Intellectual Development or Dissipation", *Harijan*, May 8, 1937; (*To the Students*, Hingorani ed., pp. 31-33). Gandhi states therein that mind, physique and spirit (heart) constitute "an indivisible whole" and he laments the baneful effects of the absence of "proper co-ordination and harmony among the various faculties of body, mind and soul."

13 B. C. Chatterji, *Gandhi or Aurobindo*, pp. 1-2, is not correct in saying : "To my mind Gandhi stands as the high-priest of renunciation, Aurobindo of life." In his personal life, of course, Gandhi was more of an ascetic than Aurobindo but Gandhi with his stress on Swaraj and Constructive Programme cannot be regarded as a prophet of renunciation.

talized world, Gandhi's philosophy of reconciliation may serve as being meaningful.

## 2. Gandhi's Theory of Nationalism, Romanticism and Civilization

Gandhi wanted India to be a "truly spiritual nation"<sup>14</sup> which valued truth more than material possessions, fearlessness more than force, and charity more than love of self. He also accepts the romantic conception of "the soul of a people" which provides the dominant foundation of its culture. He wrote : "A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the souls of its people." Like Hegel, Renan and Spengler, Gandhi also holds that the soul of a nation is mighty and creative and cannot be injured and corrupted by external attacks.

Gandhi outlined his views on Indian nationalism and civilization in his book *Hind-Swaraj* which has become a classic. Therein he categorically states that the troubles of India lie not in the political sphere but in the adoption of the incongruous civilization of the mechanical and materialistic western world.<sup>15</sup> The depression that was spread on the Indian political scene in 1908 was due, according to Gandhi, to the decline of those spiritual values, which had been giving strength and stability to Indian civilization throughout the vicissitudes of its long historical evolution. Thus like Vivekananda and Aurobindo, Gandhi also, in the *Hind-Swaraj*, upholds the thesis of the resuscitating power of religion in Indian history. Religion has been a force not for weakness and decline but it has provided vital roots to the structure of Indian civilization.

There is a strong historicist basis of Gandhi's theory of nationalism. In the *Hind-Swaraj*, the idealization of the glories of ancient Indian culture is pronounced. In his exuberance of nationalistic fervour, Gandhi held that the Indian civilization has been the mightiest that has been developed so far. He refers to the persisting continuity of Indian civilization in the context of the collapse of the Graeco-Roman and Egyptian civilizations and the westernization of Japan. Even later on, he recognized the distinctive spiritual and ethical contributions of Hinduism and wrote :

"We are dazzled by the material progress that western science has made. I am not enamoured of that progress. In fact, it almost seems as though God in His wisdom had prevented India from progressing along those lines, so that it might fulfil its special mission of resisting the onrush of materialism. After all, there is something in Hinduism that has kept

<sup>14</sup> Gandhi's speech at the Muir Central College Economic Society, Allahabad, on December 22, 1916.

<sup>15</sup> R. Rolland, "Homage from a Man of the West to Gandhi," in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *M. Gandhi*, 1st ed., p. 270, says that Gandhi represents "a paradoxical defiance hurled in the face of the politics and the thought, traditional, accepted, and unquestioned in the West."

it alive up-till now. It has witnessed the fall of Babylonian, Syrian, Persian and Egyptian civilizations.”<sup>16</sup>

India has always held her own and the erstwhile village community of India, which he was fond of calling a “republic”, of course in a non-technical sense, had been the nearest approach to civilization based on *Ahimsa*.<sup>17</sup> In spite of the fact that it was crude and that it did not incorporate the real Gandhian notion of the *Ahimsa* of the strong, it certainly marked a great achievement. The greatness of Indian civilization lay in the inculcation of the limitation of wants and a distaste of elegance and free indulgence. The founders of Indian civilization had realized that pleasure and pain are experienced only due to our mental reactions, and hence they were anxious to eliminate the pernicious and poisonous consequences of cut-throat rivalries and contests which may enlarge the number of commodities, but do not necessarily result in the achievement of contentment. While the megalopolitan centres of the modern industrialized West are places of physical and aesthetic degeneration, the rural civilization of ancient India was based on the sanctity of love, kindness and spiritual authority. Through the social structure of the caste, he points out, the villages managed their local affairs and through it they resisted any oppressions of the interfering political potentates.

The patriotic, romantic and conservative character of his philosophy of civilization is indicated in Gandhi's view that the absence of social change in the Indian world was based on the notion that principles whose vitality had been tested by historical experience did not need to be changed for the mere sake of change. Like Edmund Burke, Gandhi, thus, interpreted the political and social community as permeated with a sense of abiding partnership between the past and the future, the antique and the novel. Gandhi, hence, wanted Indians to reconstruct the rural civilization which was imminent in the evolution of the country, in place of the adoption of an alien urbanism. Even two decades later, he said :

“We are inheritors of a rural civilization. The vastness of our country, the vastness of the population, the situation and the climate of the country have in my opinion destined it for a rural civilization. Its defects are well-known but not one of them is irremediable. To uproot it and substitute for it an urban civilization seems to me an impossibility, unless we are prepared by some drastic means to reduce the population from three hundred million to three or say even thirty. I can therefore suggest remedies on the assumption that we must perpetuate the present rural civilization and endeavour to rid it of its acknowledged defects.”<sup>18</sup>

16 *Young India*, November 24, 1927, pp. 390-96.

17 M. K. Gandhi, “The Charkha”, *Harjan*, Jan. 13, 1940, reprinted in *Economic and Industrial Life and Relations*, Vol. II, p. 299.

18 M. K. Gandhi, “What May Youth Do ?” *Young India*, November 7, 1929. (*To The Students*, Hingorani, ed., p. 297).

Gandhi does not refer, however, to the immobility, the static culture and the general fatalistic outlook on life that are generated by the unchanging polity and economy of the village.

The *Hind-Swaraj* is a passionate testament of revivalism and eloquently shows how Mahatma Gandhi's soul yearned for the re-cruscience of the dominant values and patterns of Indian culture. It (the *Hind-Swaraj*) is a record of the anguish of his soul. He was sick to see that the blessed land of India was getting fast westernized. His traditionalism and historicism<sup>19</sup> are fully revealed in his view that in spite of all apparent weaknesses of modern India which are due to a superficial imitation of the western civilization,<sup>20</sup> Indians should cling to the old civilization as children to their mothers. Talking to a Polish visitor, almost three decades later, in 1938, Gandhi said that in the case of the Indian peasant an old noble culture which was centuries old was hidden under an encrustment of crudeness. If the crudeness could be removed and adequate steps taken to provide him education and the necessary requirements of life, the Indian peasant would provide one of the finest specimens of a cultured, cultivated and liberalized citizenship.

Gandhi sincerely wanted that the predominance of religious ethic should be upheld in resurgent India. Against the rising trend towards westernization, he stood for a national trans-substantiation and metamorphosis through the awakening of spiritual and moral idealism. The basic concepts in his ideal Indian civilization would be the abolition of invidious distinctions between the rich and the poor, the abolition of untouchability and intoxicating drinks, equal provision for rights of women along with those of men, peace, mutual co-operation and human unity. In 1947, he wrote about his dream of the erection of "paradise" in free India :

"In such a paradise, whether it is in the Union or in Pakistan, there will be neither paupers nor beggars, nor high nor low, neither millionaire employers nor half-starved employees, nor intoxicating drinks or drugs. There will be the same respect vouchsafed to men, and the chastity and purity of men and women will be jealously guarded. Where every woman, except one's wife, will be treated by men of all religions, as mother, sister or daughter according to her age. Where

19 Cf. the following passage from *The Indian Home Rule* quoted in A. Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and its Development*, p. 236 : "The salvation of India lies in its forgetting all it has learnt during the last fifty years. Railways, telegraphs, hospitals, lawyers, doctors and the rest must one and all disappear, and the so-called upper-classes must learn conscientiously, piously and thoughtfully to lead the life of the simple peasant because they recognize that this is the life that bestows real happiness upon us." (Our *Italics*).

20 M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, July 30, 1938 : "I have pictured to myself an India continually prospering along the lines best suited to her genius. I do not, however, picture it as a third class or even a first class copy of the *dying civilization* of the West." (Our *Italics*).

there will be no untouchability and where there will be equal respect for all faiths, they will be proudly, joyously and voluntarily bread labourers."

Thus Gandhi's philosophy of civilization stressed the values of Buddhistic-Vaishnava ethics of personal purification and the modern western concepts of social justice and cosmopolitanism. Gandhi had a genuine regard for the feelings of pity, and reverence that are characteristic of old and historical civilizations. The agrarian civilizations, generally, are characterized by traditional attachments to the home and the hearth and they look with disfavour upon the alien encroachments of scientific audacity and the rapacities of economic imperialism. Hence Gandhi was the spokesman of the sober values of ancient Indian religious culture.

As early as December, 1896, while Gandhi was on the S. S. *Courland* at the Durban harbour, he was interested in comparative reflections on western and eastern Civilizations. The former he regarded as "predominantly based on force."<sup>21</sup> He stresses moral and spiritual criteria for the comparative appraisal of the Indian Occidental social and political systems<sup>22</sup> and says that the former puts primacy upon ethical conduct and belief in a primordial spiritual reality. The latter, to the contrary, is atheistic and even encourages immoral conduct. He stated :

"It appears that western civilization is destructive, eastern civilization is constructive, western civilization is centrifugal, eastern civilization is centripetal... I believe also that western civilization is without a goal, eastern civilization has always had the goal before it."<sup>23</sup>

Modern civilization represents the forces of "evil and darkness" while the Indian civilization represents a "divine" principle.<sup>24</sup> While the ancient civilization was concerned with the exploration of spiritual laws, modern civilization concentrated its energies only upon the investigation of laws of matter. Gandhi's philosophy of the classification of civilizations on the basis of moral and spiritual categories may be substantiated by those aspects of the modern studies in social psychology of world religions, for example, the writings of Max Weber<sup>25</sup> and Troeltsch,<sup>26</sup> which emphasize the importance of the religious ethic in the differentiation of the characteristics of the civilizations of the world. Hegel also emphasized the pre-eminent role of religion in the cultural and political evolution of mankind. Gandhi, like him, would regard religion as

21 M.K. Gandhi, "The Storm", *Autobiography*, p. 138.

22 *The Collected Works of M. Gandhi*, Vol. VIII, p. 244.

23 *Ibid.*

24 M.K. Gandhi's speech at the anniversary of the Gurukul Kangri. *To The Students*, (Navajivan ed., p. 6; Hingorani ed., p. 48).

25 Max Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, (3 Vols.)

26 Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, (2 Vols.)

perhaps the most significant factor in the determination of the style of a culture.

### 3. Critique of Western Civilization

Since the Renaissance, the western world has been putting accentuated stress on this-worldly values, and consequently the dominant theocentric ethos of the Christian Middle Ages was being replaced by the gospel of rationalization of society and the conquest of nature. The world which Gandhi had to face was, by and large, becoming dominated by Darwinian evolutionism, Spencerian agnosticism, materialism, vitalism, imperialistic racialism, and industrial technology and science. It was indeed a world of "dischantment". Rationalism was the order of the day and human reason was regarded as the sole guide to the knowledge of the universe and as prescribing the criteria of human conduct. The triumph of pure rationalism, indirectly, led to the slow decline of moral piety. Hence the older religious and moral values were being considered even by their advocates in self-defence, as relevant only to mystical and transcendental regions. The world of social and political relations was undergoing a phase of secularization because of the prevalence of the cult of self-interest and there was a marked decline in the intuitive and spiritual apprehension of things. Moral values were retreating from international and national politics. The tremendous growth of economic and political nationalism was exalting patriotic and imperialistic considerations. Hence a thinker like Leo Tolstoy condemned the whole edifice built up by economics and science. He found no place in it for the divine kingdom and hence he strongly affirmed : "Science is meaningless because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important for us, 'What shall we do and how shall we live'."<sup>27</sup> Tolstoy strongly reacted against the assumptions of Darwinism, ecclesiasticism and contemporary science and art, and he preached a return to the simple innocence of the teachings of the gospels.<sup>28</sup> In his interpretation of the trends and foundations of contemporary civilizations, Gandhi was, as stated earlier, considerably influenced by Tolstoy. Gandhi challenged the principles and assumptions of modern civilization. The sophisticated, technological, commercial, aggressive and lustful aspects of modern western civilization repelled him because it was based on the exploitation of the weaker peoples and its complicated material life was inconsistent with high thinking.

Gandhi had seen three continents but it was a chaotic world seized with the malady of racial violence and it perturbed his soul. He had a deep and personal experience of western civilization in some of its uglier aspects of racial barbarism and reckless exploi-

27 Quoted in Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, (supra), p. 143.

28 Leo Tolstoy, *The Gospel in Brief*, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, The Kreut-  
er Company

tationist<sup>29</sup> effrontery. His feelings of unfriendly antagonism to western civilization were confirmed by the hypocrisy, the insincerity, the policies of discrimination and persecution and even inhumanity of the ruling white group in South Africa. The rampant racialism of that country repelled his sensitive soul. He even charges General Smuts with being a liar and a deceiver in his book *Satyagraha in South Africa*.<sup>30</sup> In the bitterness of his disappointments and protests, Gandhi regarded western civilization as tantamount to barbaric mechanical magnificence whose pernicious branches and configurations had to be prevented from coroding the sacred land of Hindustan.

Gandhi lived long to be a witness to the two great holocausts of the world wars. Thus it is evident that the world, which Gandhi saw, was full of powerful and engulfsing strains, excitements and crises. Armed centres of formidable military and political power were creating factors of trouble and areas of conflict. There were crises, and the cult of "preparedness" was pursued with relentless and remorseless energy. Peace was only an intermittent interlude between wars and crises. It was an era of "armed peace". There was an unstable equilibrium between opposing and contending imperialistic coalitions. Hence the situation demanded a fundamental cure and the practice of the gospel of social accord and amity. Gandhi felt that western materialism, commerce and science could not prescribe the true remedy which could be based only on truth and non-violence. His moral and spiritual approach to the problems of Indian civilization and his quest for a spiritual teleology in the world, resulted in his bitter disillusionment with western civilization. He found that the civilization of the west was seized with schism and disruption because of the persistent spectre of violent conflicts and struggles.

Gandhi stated that there were destructive tendencies immanent in the very framework and organization of the western civilization. It betokened the age of Satan, or the Kali Yuga<sup>31</sup> of the Hindu mythological terminology. Plato and Seneca had also visualised civilization as degeneration as compared to the previous Golden Age. Gandhi was hostile to modern civilization because it only amassed physical and material comforts but did not provide real courage and strength which come from an unshakeable belief in God. Gandhi called modern civilization to be a "monster"<sup>32</sup> which was spreading

<sup>29</sup> M. K. Gandhi, "Shortcomings of Western Civilization", *Collected Works*, Vol. X, pp. 134-35, says that the western civilization "grinds down the masses and in which a few men capture power in the name of the people and abuse it." Hence he raised the question (in 1910) whether it should be tolerated or banished.

<sup>30</sup> M. K. Gandhi, "Foul Play", *Indian Opinion*, M.K. Gandhi, "General Smut's Breach of Faith" (?) Chap. XXV in *Satyagraha in South Africa*.

<sup>31</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Hind-Swaraj*, (Hindi edition, Sasta Sahitya Mandala, 1939), pp. 46-47.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

its tentacles in India and was aiming to spoil, ruin and demolish the religious foundations of Indian culture. He was, of course, not blind to some of the myths and superstitions gathering and clustering in the name of religion but he felt that even these religious myths were better than the superstitions of people engrossed in mundane considerations. He even castigated modern civilization as a “*chandala civilization*”<sup>33</sup> and fulminated against its Indian advocates as traitors and sinners.<sup>34</sup> He wrote :

“The last war has shown as nothing else as has the Satanic nature of the civilization that dominates Europe today. Every canon of public morality has been broken by the victors in the name of virtue. No lie has been considered too foul to be uttered. The motive behind every crime is not religious or spiritual, but grossly material . . . . Europe today is only nominally Christian. In reality it is worshipping Mammon.”<sup>35</sup>

Hence it is clear that Gandhi's revolt against the west, as formulated in the *Hind-Swaraj*, is much more trenchant than that of Vivekananda and Aurobindo.<sup>36</sup> It is true that in later years Gandhi moderated the tone of his strictures. But in the *Hind-Swaraj* the only remedy, according to him, was “to drive out”<sup>37</sup> western civilization.

He was also opposed to the proposal of female emancipation which is a characteristic of modern civilization because it leads to the destruction of the stability of home life. He had the greatest respect, however, for the female sex. The woman symbolized to him the aspect of mother with the highest capacity for suffering. She was to be a colleague and comrade rather than a competitor.

Gandhi believed in Nature Cure and he had recommended the writings of Kuhne, Just<sup>38</sup> and Kneip. He condemned the practice of modern western medicine. Like Plato, he appears as a critic of the doctors and the medical profession<sup>39</sup> and feels that there is no ethical inclination and disposition behind this calling which is dictated merely by the sordid instinct of possession. He once called medicine “the concentrated essence of black magic.” It encourages men in intemperate living because rich people are sure to obtain some kind of medical remedy. It prevents the growth of temperate living. Modern

33 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

35 *Young India*, September 8, 1920.

36 There is a great difference between Gandhi and Aurobindo with regard to their views of western materialistic civilization. Gandhi, in his bitterness, regards western civilization as a “disease” but Aurobindo regards vitalism, rationalism and materialism as a necessary stage in the evolution of the spirit and as preparing the background for a deeper and more comprehensive philosophy which can reconcile the claims of both matter and spirit.

37 *Hind-Swaraj*, p. 177.

38 Gandhi was inspired by Just's *Return to Nature*.

39 *Hind-Swaraj*, pp. 95-99, (Hindi edition).

medicine also stands further rejected because some of its drugs contain fat of animals and also wine. Gandhi favoured naturopathy including 'earth cure'. In the bitterness of his protest, in the *Hind-Swaraj*, he considers the quack Vaidya to be better than the modern doctor but he would uphold this view in his later writings.<sup>40</sup> It is undoubted that there is gross overstatement in Gandhi's criticisms of the medical profession. The career of a theologian-musician-philosopher-doctor like Dr. Albert Schweitzer would definitely indicate the moral foundations of the medical profession. But behind Gandhi's exaggerated bitterness lay the suspicion that modern medicine was only an outcome of the multiplying phases and aspects of the western civilization which was trying to stifle, suffocate and deaden the old Indian culture. Gandhi believed that "the spread of *Rama nama* and pure living are the best and cheapest preventives of disease." He sincerely adhered to the view that "Disease is impossible where there is purity of thought."<sup>41</sup> All people may not agree with Gandhi's faith in *Rama nama* as an infallible remedy but all people will find great wisdom in his statement that "a balanced diet eaten in accordance with needs gives one freedom from disease."

Gandhi's bitterness against western civilization is thoroughly revealed in the pages of the *Hind-Swaraj*. It should be remembered, however, that Gandhi wrote this famous indictment of western civilization when he was returning to South Africa in a ship, after the failure in its mission of the Indian delegation to London in 1908. This book which became the philosophical and sociological basis of the Satyagraha Movement from 1908 to 1914, does contain a note of ridicule of the western civilization. But the situational context amidst which this book was written explains its rather pungent remarks against western materialism. Later on, Gandhi never indulged in similar trenchant denunciations but he did never withdraw any view or statement from that book, and hence it may justifiably be considered that that work reflects his considered sociological opinions.

Gandhi's indictment of the British rule is also relevant to his general critique of western civilization because, according to him, the political sway of Britain was only an aspect of the domination of western civilization. He indicted British imperialism for the widespread degeneration that it had initiated and, later, perpetuated in India. He felt that the British rule has made India "poorer in wealth, in manliness, in godliness and in her sons' power to defend themselves." It is clear that, in Gandhi, there is a moral revolt against the deprivation of strength and the consequent enervation produced as an effect of British imperialism.

40 For a mild criticism of Ayurveda, see *Young India*, June 11, 1925. Gandhi almost contradicts his old view stated in the *Hind-Swaraj* when he says that the system of the Vaidyas is "haphazard" and whether it hits or misses its aim depends on "chance". —(M. K. Gandhi, *Letters to Sardar Patel*, p. 105.)

41 *Harijan*, June 9, 1946.

Modern civilization has also resulted in the oppression of Indians and, in general, has been responsible for India's economic slavery.

Gandhi's critique of western education in India is also related to his sociology of civilization. As an ethical idealist, he emphasized the purification of character. He had no affection for a mere bookish education. He wanted an education in character that would train the boys and girls to face the struggles of life. He was an advocate of national education in the twenties and later on, in the thirties, of basic education. Western education is condemned by Gandhi because it does not lead to the growth of character. It has emasculated the Indian youth and made them dependents upon an imperialistic system. In spite of its exaggerated claims of having provided political education to India, it has not produced men of the type of Samkara, Chaitanya, Nanak, Kabir, Govind Singh and Dayananda.<sup>42</sup> It generates hypocrisy and aggravates the demands of the passions. English education, Gandhi states in the *Hind-Swaraj*, had produced a class of lawyers who support the legal apparatus of an alien imperialism for the sake of their own narrow purposes.<sup>43</sup> He gives only limited credit to the lawyers for the success of the Indian National Congress Movement.

There were two meaningful factors responsible for his bitterness against western civilization. First, it must always be remembered that Gandhi was a lover of the beauty of innocence because he was a devout soul and was attached to simple feelings. He judged things by the criteria of simplicity, morality and ascetic severity and rigor. He could not have sympathized with the growing formalization, mechanization, depersonalization and bureaucratization which have become the characteristics of modern large-scale economic and social enterprises. The increasing complexity of the modern world repelled him. He loved the simple community-oriented interpersonal relations—which are possible in the life of an *Ashrama* and a village. Gandhi never relished the superfluities and luxuries of civilization and he always loved the simple agrarian life of innocence, and hence stated that the salvation of India lay in raising up the Indian village population. He even admonished the students of the Gujarat Vidyapitha to cultivate true "rural-mindedness."<sup>44</sup> True civilization as interpreted by Gandhi consists not in the accumulation of commodities but in a deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. Modern civilization, on the other hand, based on accumulation was almost equivalent to darkness and disease.

Secondly, Gandhi was inspired by a section of western thinkers

42 M. K. Gandhi, "An Unmitigated Evil", *Young India*, April 13, 1921; "English Education", April 27, 1921, (*To The Students*, Hingorani, ed., pp. 14-18).

43 *Ibid.*, pp. 87-90.

44 *Harijan*, February 29, 1936.

who had been vigorously critical of some of the dominant aspects of the West.<sup>45</sup> Gandhi prescribed a return to nature like Plato, Rousseau and Tolstoy. He was a prophet of the moral values challenging both the foundations of political and economic imperialism, and the concept of an externalistic and technological civilization. Like Rousseau, Gandhi would say that the advancement in the external art of modern civilization had been synchronistic with the decline of faith, piety and charity. Like Rousseau<sup>46</sup> and Tolstoy<sup>47</sup>, he longed for the simple agrarian life. His reaction against the ostentatiousness and, to some extent, the crudities, cruelties and brutalities of modern civilization had a Rousseauic element. His spirit had more kinship with Plato than with Aristotle. He had more in common with Rousseau<sup>48</sup> than with Diderot and Voltaire. Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau and Edward Carpenter<sup>49</sup> provided him considerable additional intellectual evidence for his views born out of the experiences he had encountered.<sup>50</sup> He quoted Wallace in support of his critique of modern civilization.<sup>51</sup> Hence, Gandhi's approach to western civilization was moral and philosophical rather than sociological and scientific.

45 In the Appendix to the *Hind-Swaraj*, Gandhi recommends the study of the following treatises and booklets to corroborate his conclusions :

1. Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. 2. Tolstoy, *What is Art?*  
 3. Tolstoy, *The Slavery of Our Times*. 4. Tolstoy, *The First Step*. 5. Tolstoy, *How Shall We Escape?* 6. Tolstoy, *Letter to a Hindoo*. 7. Sherard, *The White Slaves of England*. 8. Carpenter, *Civilization, Its Cause and Cure*. 9. Taylor, *The Fallacy of Speed*. 10. Blount, *A New Crusade*. 11. Thoreau, *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*. 12. Thoreau, *Life Without Principle*. 13. Ruskin, *Unto This Last*. 14. Ruskin, *A Joy for Ever*. 15. Mazzini, *Duties of Man*. 16. From Plato, *Defence and Death of Socrates*. 17. Max Nordau, *Paradoxes of Civilization*. 18. Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*. 19. Dutt, *Economic History of India*. 20. Maine, *Village Communities*.

46 Rousseau was opposed to urbanism. In the *Social Contract*, Book III, Chapter 13, he wrote : "...the walls of the towns are built of the ruins of the houses of the countryside. For every palace I see raised in the capital, my mind's eye sees a whole country made desolate."

47 Tolstoy's ideal was the *mir* and his cry was "Back to the land".—C. Gide & C. Rist, *A History of Economic Doctrines*, (London, George G. Harrap, 1943), pp. 513-14.

48 In a speech to the students of Marseilles in September 1931, Gandhi said that he had learnt something "of the teachings of Rousseau and Victor Hugo." —(Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. III, 113).

49 In a letter to H. L. Polak in September, 1909, *Collected Works*, Vol. IX, p. 396, Gandhi wrote regarding Carpenter's *Civilization : Cause and Cure*, "His analysis of the civilization, as we know it, is very good. His condemnation though very severe is, in my opinion, entirely deserved."

50 Gandhi read Carlyle's *French Revolution* in a South African prison. "Carlyle's *French Revolution* is written in very effective style. It made me understand that we could hardly learn from the European nations any remedy for the present miseries of India. I am of opinion that the French people have secured no special benefit by their Revolution. This was what Mazzini thought also." —(C. F. Andrews ed., *Mahatma Gandhi at Work*, p. 216).

51 M. K. Gandhi, "Economic Progress Vs. Moral Progress", *To The Students*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan, 1949), pp. 31-32.

#### 4. Reflections on Gandhi's Theory of Civilization

In the *Hind-Swaraj*, Gandhi shows his passionate attachment to the glories of Indian culture. His hostility against western civilization and his exaltation of the stature and canons of Indian civilization is somewhat in line with the general drift and direction of the Indian revivalistic movement, some of whose exponents and leaders have been Dayananda, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Tilak, Aurobindo and Ramatirtha. Indian revivalism is somewhat comparable to the Russian Slavophil movement which grew against the party of Westernizers in Russia. Gandhi firmly held in his later writings as well as in his earlier, that the ancient land of Hindustan had to reveal the message of non-violence to a gloomy world. In a message given in April, 1919, Gandhi stated categorically that Indians were groaning "because we have swerved from the path laid down for us by our ancient civilization."<sup>52</sup>

It is evident that Gandhi's critique of western civilization is much more deep-seated and fundamental than that of Marx. Marx was a critic of industrial capitalism and its several contradictions, but Gandhi stood as an opponent of the entire western tradition of *machtpolitik*. His opposition was confined not only to the European civilization as built up during the epoch of the Enlightenment and industrial revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it extended to the basic assumptions of a socio-economic system having its roots in materialistic rationalism, power politics and economic nationalism. As a believer in spiritual idealism and moral autonomy, he could not tolerate the extension, glorification and perpetuation of force. He championed moral will in place of political coercion. He offered a spiritual interpretation of history and his profound faith in the eventual triumph of the law of *Ahimsa* set him apart totally from the Malthus-Darwin-Nietzsche-Kidd<sup>53</sup> school of politics.

Earlier than Spengler, Gandhi prophesied the decline and doom of western civilization but, nevertheless, he had tremendous faith in the rejuvenating power of the human spirit, and hence he stated that non-violence could provide a healing tonic to modern civilization.

Gandhi was a humanitarian and an ethical universalist, and hence he pleaded for a generous and tolerant attitude to the cultures of the world. Hence although a critic of western mechanistic, materialistic and externalistic civilization, he pleaded for a cultural synthesis based on eastern and western religious world-views. In an early speech at Hampstead, Gandhi refuted Kipling's thesis of

52 Quoted in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. I, p. 251.

53 Benjamin Kidd (1858-1916) was a supporter of imperialism, racialism and struggle for existence.—B. Kidd, *Social Evolution*, (1894); and *Social Power*, (Posthumous publication, 1918).

the eternal separation of the East and the West, and concurred with Tennyson who in "his *Vision* clearly foretold the union between East and West."<sup>54</sup> Gandhi also believed in cultural pluralism and repudiated the concepts of cultural isolationism and cultural superiority. He even advocated the building of a "new culture" based on the traditions of the past and also enriched by later experiences which will assure to each cultural its due and proper place. Thus, in place of cultural exclusiveness Gandhi stood for "a beautiful blend of cultures."<sup>55</sup> He wrote : "I claim to represent all the cultures, for my religion, whatever it may be called, demands the fulfilment of all cultures."<sup>56</sup> The Gandhian theory of cultural synthesis and reconciliation<sup>57</sup> was strengthened by his convictions that the essential and fundamental ethic was the same in all the great religious systems. The concept of cultural pluralism<sup>58</sup> stressed by Gandhi can alone be the foundation of a stable world order. Any claim of the superiority of one's own culture is a danger to world peace.

The real role of Gandhi was in being the prophet of a reconstructed commonwealth of mankind based on universal peace, non-violence as active, positive love and unrestrained mutual relations. As an exponent of cosmopolitanism, he was genuinely concerned with the ever-recurring threats to peace in the modern world. He is justified in raising the question of the reconcilability of peace and a technological civilization. Peace or *tranquillitas* is always essential for civilization and more so when the atomic age has threatened the world with chances of international suicide. Peace is an attitude of social accommodation and of limitations of one's wants and this postulates a religious view of civilization which, there is a danger, the endless morass of mechanical growth may endanger. Gandhi reasserts the sanctity of the moral and spiritual norms for the preservation of civilization against the portentous and ominous advance of weapons of destruction brought forth by technology.

But, nevertheless, he becomes unrealistic and unhistorical when he states that the rejection of technological civilization in old India was due to a conscious decision of the seers, founders and patriarchs

54 *Collected Works*, IX, pp. 475-76.

55 *Harijan*, November 2, 1947.

56 *Harijan* April, 30, 1940.

57 Cf. the following statement of Gandhi quoted in *Gandhiji*, (75th Birthday Volume of M. Gandhi), Bombay, Karnatak Publishing House, 1944, pp. 63-64 : "It does not propose merely to feed on, or repeat the ancient cultures. It rather hopes to build a new culture based on traditions of the past, enriched with the experience of later times . . . But Indian culture is neither Hindu, Islamic nor any other, wholly. It is a fusion of all and essentially eastern . . . The synthesis will naturally be of the *Swadeshi* type where each culture is assured its legitimate place." (Our *Italics*).

58 In an article entitled "The Loin-Cloth", *Young India*, April 30, 1930, Gandhi wants that India could "adopt and assimilate whatever may be good and capable of assimilation" in European civilization. But it would be ruinous to copy it.

of Indian culture.<sup>59</sup> The growth of technological civilization is the end-product of a diverse set of social, economic, political and environmental forces and influences, and it cannot be interpreted in the rather too simple terms of the exercise of the deliberation of will, this way or that, by the leaders and thinkers in a concrete context. The absence of an independently created scientific and industrial civilization in Asia cannot be regarded as a direct social result of the religious ethic of transcendence advocated by the exponents of eastern cultures, because at several periods in its history, a type of world-and-life-negating asceticism has also been prevalent even in the West. There are transcendentalistic trends in Plato, Dante, Eckhart and Robert Blake. But despite mystical and transcendental trends, the West could evolve a scientific and mechanical civilization. Why could not the East do so? There is, hence, certainly, present an element of unconvincingness in Gandhi's view that the Indian seers of old deliberately decided not to build a machine civilization.

To the credit of Gandhi, however, it must be said that he has raised a healthy voice of objection against and disapproval of the trend toward ever-growing mechanization, and has thereby made significant the discussion of the problem of formal mechanical rationality versus the ideals of peace, and moral culture. He pleads for the discussion of social, political and economic problems in a comprehensive context. He does exaggerate his critical, and at times bitterly severe, remarks against machines especially in the *Hind-Swaraj*, but even these exaggerated pronouncements have rendered an intellectual service in focussing attention of thinkers on the fundamental problems of civilization, machine and ethics. Gandhi accepted the supremacy of the canons of truth and non-violence for the stability of civilizations, and against the dominance of machines and technics, he stands for the minimization of social and political force and for an inclusive cultural synthesis based on the pursuit of simplicity.

59 Gandhi, *Hind-Swaraj*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, Reprint of 1958), pp. 61-62, wrote : "It was not that we did not know how to invent machinery ; but our forefathers knew that, if we set our hearts after such things, we should become slaves and lose our moral fibre. They, therefore, after due deliberation, decided that we should only do that which we could do with our hands and feet."

# 8

## THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

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### 1. Varnashrama As The Perfect Social Pattern

(a) *Varna as Hereditary Functionalism.* Gandhi accepted the social philosophy of *Varna*. An equalitarian society based on active mutual love and harmony was his goal and, hence, although he accepted the sociology of the *Varnashrama* he refused to acknowledge any sense of distance and subordination between the *Varnas*. According to him, the Hindu sociology of *Varna* eliminated unworthy competition, was natural to man in his regenerate and civilized state and, although determined by birth, could be retained only by the willing performance of the obligations entailed by it. He thought of it as a functional organization of society determined by Nature or God and oriented to the realization of the harmony of the community without there being any sense of constraint and domination from the sections following intellectual and military professions.

Several times he would use *Varna* and caste interchangeably and attributed to the latter an organic, functional and non-competitive character. He wrote :

"The spirit behind caste is not one of arrogant superiority ; it is the classification of different systems of self-culture. It is the best possible adjustment of social stability and progress. Just as the spirit of the family is inclusive of those who love each other and are wedded to each other by ties of blood and relation, caste also tries to include families of a particular way of purity of life (not standard of life, meaning by this term, economic standard of life). Only it does not leave the decision, whether a particular family belongs to a particular type, to the idiosyncrasies or interested judgment of a few individual."<sup>1</sup>

Gandhi even regarded the Hindu social structure based on *Varna* to be true socialism. (i) If the principle of *Varna* was followed

in its original Vedic sense of functional organization, (ii) if all members of society participated in bread labour, (iii) if all labour should carry the same value, the primary wants of all being the same, then, according to Gandhi it was nothing but socialism.<sup>2</sup>

Although a believer in *Varna* determined by birth, Gandhi was emphatic in stating that it conferred no privilege and resulted in no social subordination. He wrote :

"It is against the genius of Hinduism to arrogate to oneself a higher status or assign others to a lower. All are born to serve God's creation, the Brahman with his knowledge, the Kshatriya with his power of protection, the Vaishya with his commercial ability, the Shudra with his bodily labour. This does not mean that a Brahman is absolved from bodily labour, but it does mean that he is predominantly a man of knowledge and fitted by training and heredity to impart it to others. There is nothing again to prevent a Shudra from acquiring all the knowledge he wishes. Only he will best serve with his body and need not envy others their special qualities for service. A Brahman who claims superiority by right of knowledge falls and has no knowledge. And so with the others who pride themselves upon their special qualities, *Varnashrama* is self-restraint and conservation and economy of energy."<sup>3</sup>

He pleaded for the restoration of the essential principle on which the original *Varna* was based—the elimination of competition and the realization of the common good through duties done in proportion to one's attainments and faculties.<sup>4</sup>

It may be worth while to note here the difference between the ideas of Gandhi and Dayananda with regard to *Varna*. Both claimed to champion the *Varna* in its Vedic sense and both denounced the perversities of the caste system which is a degeneration of the *Varna*. But, paradoxically enough, while the Brahmin Dayananda agreed that the determination of *Varna* would be made in accordance with the criteria of *Guna* (qualities), *Karma* (action) and *Svabhava* (psychological attainment or inherent nature), the western-educated Vaishya Gandhi was much more conservative and held that *Varna* would be determined by heredity. While Dayananda quoted the Vedas in support of his view, Gandhi interpreted the Gita word *Srishtam*<sup>5</sup> (चारुर्षणं मया सृष्टम्) as supporting the view that the *Varna* is determined by birth.

2 He also stated : "What is the system of *Varnashrama* but a means of harmonizing the difference between high and low, as well as between capital and labour."—*Amrit Bazar Patrika*, August 3, 1934. (Reproduced in M. K. Gandhi, *Sarvodaya*, Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1954, p. 91.)

3 M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, October 6, 1921, p. 317.

4 Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan*, (1940), that one great contribution of the *Varnashrama* was that it confined the use of arms to the Kshatriyas only.

5 The *Bhagavadgita*, IV, 13.

(b) *Demerits and Merits of the Caste (Jati) System.* He was candid enough, however, to recognize the grave social evils with which the original Vedic *Varna* had become encumbered in the course of its evolution, and he condemned in unmeasured terms the social enormities and perverse exploitation practised in the name of caste superiority. The existing structure of innumerable castes was a negation of the old *Varna*. It imposed unhealthy impediments on the growth of social solidarity and hence was detrimental to the well-being of the Hindus as well as to the development of nationalism. It encouraged complicated ritualism and ceremonialism, and thus was a bar also to the development of genuine religious feeling. Hence Gandhi who recognized only the four *Varnas* as rational and fundamental made a strong plea for the abolition of the evils and injustices of the caste system.

But Gandhi generally took an evolutionary approach to history and social institutions, and wanted to demonstrate the rationality of even the much condemned system of caste which had been almost immanent in the historical evolution of the country. It is impossible to go against the laws of one's being. Neither an individual nor a society could take a revolutionary leap and overturn the fundamental pattern of its action. Gandhi was a reformer through and through, but he did not like to give a rough handling to social patterns and institutions for the sheer delight of novelty and social experimentation. His defence, in his earlier writings, of the sociological assumptions of the caste (as a degeneration of the Vedic *Varna*) has to be seen in a historical perspective. He had written :

"The vast organization of caste answered not only to the religious wants of the community but it answered to its political needs. The villagers managed their internal affairs through the caste system, and through it they dealt with any oppression from the ruling power or powers. It is not possible to deny of a nation that was capable of producing the caste system its wonderful power of organization."<sup>6</sup>

Gandhi defended the caste structure as a trade guild.<sup>7</sup> It had these merits :

- (i) It made possible the perpetuation of acquired professional skill through hereditary transmission.
- (ii) It imposed restrictions on economic competition.
- (iii) It was an insurance against poverty. It regulated social service in the event of disease and death.<sup>8</sup>
- (iv) It checked social disorganization.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in N. K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, (No. 765), from M. K. Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings*.

<sup>7</sup> *Young India*, April 13, 1921, p. 114 ; and January 5, 1921, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, (edition of 1960), Vol. I, p. 268.

Thus like Burke, Ronald and De Maistre, Gandhi seemed to find meaning in the abiding persistence of historical institutions.

Gandhi's views regarding the *Varna* and the caste indicate his conservative historicism and traditionalism. As a keen political leader, he knew very well that the foundations of long-accepted leadership specially in a tradition-ridden country like India could lie only in the social consensus of the majority of the people. Hence he could not afford to denounce the principle of determination of one's function by his birth. It is very true that he had a flexible and resolute mind and had an infinite capacity to read new and even revolutionary meanings into older concepts. Thus, when socialism became an emotion-stirring concept in Indian politics, Gandhi came out with the statement that the *Varna* system was true socialism. He even stated that the *Varna* principle of functional organization would operate in the ideal society of *Ramraj*. But while all the time, in his later years, he was reading socialistic and functional notions into the traditional concept of *Varna*, he could continue to adhere to the conservative and even reactionary doctrine that an adult should follow the profession of his father because of psychological and other environmental facilities. This latter notion of following one's father's profession has been the deep foundation of the caste structure as it has been conceived in the Brahmanical *Smritis* and *Shastras*. Gandhi's historicist conservatism is revealed in the view which he held to the last that according to the law of *Varna* one has to earn his bread "by following the ancestral calling." It is clear that members of the backward and Scheduled Castes would regard Gandhi's view not only as a historicist apology but even reactionary. Gandhi also seemed unaware of the contradiction involved in simultaneously bolstering up the socialistic and the traditional interpretations of the *Varna* order.

There are indications that towards the end of his life, he said that in his ideal scheme of *Ramrajya* there would be no place for a hierarchical structure based on castes and classes. Towards the end of his life Gandhi felt that as a result of marriages between caste Hindus and Harijans "there will be only one caste, known by the beautiful name Bhangi, that is to say, the reformer or remover of all dirt."<sup>9</sup> He wrote : "Classless society is the ideal, not merely to be aimed at but to be worked for and, in such society, there is no room for classes or communities."<sup>10</sup> He began to approve of and bless inter-caste marriages.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps it is correct to state that Gandhi (at least towards the end of his life) accepted the concept of an undiffe-

<sup>9</sup> *Harijan*, July 7, 1946, p. 212.

<sup>10</sup> M. K. Gandhi, "Some Labour Questions", *Harijan*, February 17, 1946, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> M. K. Gandhi, "Marriages between Harijans and Non-Harijans," *Harijan*, July 7, 1946, p. 212. M. K. Gandhi, "Confusing the Issue", *Harijan*, March 4, 1933, p. 5, says that the Vedas and the Mahabharata contain references to inter-dining and inter-marriages.

rentiated social structure. It appears that with the passage of time, Gandhi's historicist conservatism demonstrated in his defence not only of the ideal type of *Varna*, but to a certain extent, in the *Hind-Swaraj* and other writings, even of the caste in its operative efficacy, slightly yielded place to some kind of radical social equalitarianism.

## 2. Untouchability

Gandhi was opposed to reactionary cultural traditions and antiquated, meaningless social customs and relations. He once declared : "I am a reformer through and through, but my zeal never leads me to the rejection of any of the essential things of Hinduism."<sup>12</sup> But untouchability had no integral connexion with the essence of Hinduism because it was irrational and a denial of *Ahimsa*.

As a Vedantist and a Vaishnava, Gandhi believed in the spiritual oneness of all life, and hence he was absolutely opposed to untouchability. The eradication of untouchability, root-and-branch, was a matter of atoning for the sins of the cruel sections of the Hindu world. Gandhi declared in poignant terms : "One hundred lives given for this noble cause would, in my opinion, be poor penance done by Hindus for the atrocious wrongs they have heaped upon helpless men and women of their own faith." Hence he earnestly pleaded for "real brotherly embrace." He felt that the virus of untouchability was only a prominent phase of the devil of social arrogance and chauvinism and this curse gave deep agony to his heart. He once said : "I do not desire to be born again, but if I am really born again, I desire to be born amidst the untouchables, so as to share their difficulties and to work for their liberation." He began public work for the removal of untouchability since 1915. In 1932, he considered its removal as an issue of transcendental value, surpassing even political independence. His fast unto death, in 1932, against the infamous Communal Award which was calculated to sever the body of Hindu community by providing separate electorates to the so-called untouchables will be always regarded as an example of monumental self-sacrifice. By the Poona Pact, joint electorates were provided although there were reservations of seats for the Harijans. In 1933, Gandhi fasted for twenty-one days to make penance for the sins of the caste Hindus against the Harijans. Gandhi appeared as a revolutionary leader, preaching social equality to a conservative tradition-gripped Hindu India, and due to his efforts many conservative groups had to open temples to Harijans. His protracted campaign against untouchability was an advance in the direction of the recognition of human rights and he honestly confessed that his fight against the deadly sin of untouchability was a fight against the impure in humanity.

His successful struggle against the dark sin of untouchability

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<sup>12</sup> M. K. Gandhi, "Sanatana Hinduism", *Hindu Dharma*, (*Young India*, October, 1921), p. 8.

will always be regarded as a vital contribution to Indian civilization and culture. He had the boldness to fight against a system and a prejudice sanctioned by centuries old conservatism. Buddha, Kabir, Ram Mohan and Dayananda were prophets of social equalitarianism, but Gandhi enormously extended that tradition.

### **3. Gandhi and the Historical Evolution of Indian Social System and Philosophy**

In a way, for centuries and even for a millennium India did not have the experience of Swaraj. The word Swarajya is mentioned in the *Aitareya Brahman*. In the earlier days, it signified the notion of dominance or monarchical supremacy. In the earlier periods of Indian history, even when the country was formally independent, the vast masses did not experience Swaraj. They were merely the objects of a history rather than its subjects. The monarchical lords, the feudal exploiters and the dogmatic Brahmanical priests had entered into an unholy alliance for the direct or indirect exploitation of the masses. One certainly is impressed by the aesthetic grandeur, ethical sublimity and literary excellence of Sanskrit literature. Who will not feel enraptured by reading the expressions of Kalidasa, Bhairavi and Sri Harsha ? But it must be stated that the vast portion of Sanskrit literature breathes a spirit of caste arrogance and superiority. This is a negation of the ideal of Swaraj.

Gautama Buddha took a great step forward when he championed the claims of the Kshatriyas to spiritual knowledge, but he failed in evolving a social philosophy which could acknowledge the rights and privileges of all the down-trodden and suppressed sections of Indian humanity. Buddha, to a small extent, liberalised and humanised the traditional social structure, but he was not democratic and never socialistic in his political and economic philosophy. He did strengthen the cause of moral individualism by his attempts to remove the priestly barriers in the path of the acquisition of final knowledge leading to emancipation. But he did not evolve that comprehensive and inclusive social philosophy which would assert that all the inhabitants of this country had equal social rights and equal political privileges. But we need not blame Buddha for his limited outlook. Along with other great leaders of history, he also was inhibited by the conditions of his age. It would be fantastic to demand from him a promulgation of a charter of human equality in the social and political fields. Credit should be given to him for what he taught and achieved, although, retrospectively, we may analyse the limitations under which he worked. It must be acknowledged that Gautama Buddha, Mahavira, Gosala, and other non-Vedic teachers were more conscious of the status, rights and privileges of the down-trodden sections than the Vedic poets and writers. Their revolt was the first stage in the evolution of a liberal social and political philosophy in India.

It has been said that Mahatma Gandhi was the greatest Indian since Gautama Buddha. This characterization is considerably true. In terms of wide influence shown by their assumption of international leadership and in the advocacy of the sanctity of moral values for social and individual life, Buddha and Gandhi have been the most significant personalities in Indian history. But I think that in terms of social liberalism, Gandhi was more humane than Gautama Buddha. We do not exactly know what Gautama Buddha himself specifically said and preached. For getting a correct picture of his teachings we have to rely on the *Tripitakas*. We have to say that the Gandhian social philosophy is more comprehensive, more tolerant, more democratic and more egalitarian than that of the *Tripitakas*. In contrast to the Vedic and the Brahmanical system, Buddha, of course, was a liberal. He preached against the Vedas and the violent sacrifices as well as the Brahmanical notions of social superiority, but he did not sponsor an all-India nationalism in which the down-trodden people, the Scheduled Castes and the other suppressed sections of the Hindu society could find a fraternal embrace and shelter. In the *Tripitakas*, Buddha is represented as always conscious of his Kshatriya birth. His liberalism extended to fraternization with the Vaishyas but so far as the most suppressed fourth estate and people even further down are concerned, Buddha was, more or less, a conservative. Gandhi, on the other hand, opened the portals of his Ashrama for the untouchables. He treated them as his own kith and kin. The untouchables of the Ashrama were to be treated as brothers and sisters or sons and daughters, according to their age and sex. He went to the extent of even quarrelling with his own life for equal treatment to a Christian untouchable living in his house in South Africa. This shows his utter sincerity. In his fight against untouchability, Gandhi stood up as a great prophet of human equality. His fight was more protracted, more comprehensive and more detailed than any undertaken by any teacher or leader so far. In his social philosophy and practice, decidedly, he proved to be a greater humanitarian than Gautama Buddha.

The great medieval commentators of the Vedanta, remarkable in their ingenuity, logical subtlety and keen powers of metaphysical construction, were absolutely unscrupulous in their eulogization of priestly supremacy. Even Sankara, the great Vedantic logician, was a cruel denouncer of the Shudras. If one reads the *Grihyasutras*, the *Dharmasutras*, and the *Smritis*, one certainly would be impressed by their ethical teachings. They stress truth, charity and the other moral virtues, but when they discuss social organisation it appears that they become completely unbalanced, irrational and even senseless in their statements. Perhaps nowhere in the world can one meet with such hypocritical and apologetic statements in defence of the priestly order as in the *Smritis*. In face of the absence of the concept of rule of law and the complete glorification of the rights and privileges of the priests and the kings,

*it will be a mockery of words to say that there was a notion of genuine Swaraj pervading the writings of the Smritikaras. Hence, neither in theory, nor in practice, was there any conception of genuine Swaraj for the Vaishyas, Shudras and other suppressed sections in India's vast literary and political history.*

In the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and even later on, there was the rise of the *Bhakti* cult, and the various saints, teachers and reformers in the country preached the gospel of human equality at least in the spiritual field. Some of the teachers vehemently reacted against the priestly claims of superiority and caste arrogance. Nanaka ridiculed the claim of the Vedas to have been revealed by Brahma. He denounced Vedic teachings. Kabir had the superior foresight to know that under the garb of Vedic infallibility and the inscrutable character of the Sanskritic literature, the Brahmin priests were supporting their own claims to superiority. He, hence, denounced Sanskrit learning as the water stored in a well while the vehicle of popular communication was compared by him to a running stream. The teachings of the saints did mark the second significant stage in the liberalisation of Indian social and political philosophy.

Shivaji attempted to build a broad-based Hindu-pada-padashahi. He himself came from the backward classes. He was a Maratha which is a backward caste. He tried to galvanise the backward sections like the Mavalas and others into a political order. But the novel work of social liberalism that Shivaji attempted was sought to be destroyed by the clever designs of the Peshawas. The latter failed to build an organic social polity in Maharashtra. One of the reasons why the third Peshawa, Balaji Vishwanath, was beaten at Panipat by the Afghan Ahmad Shah Abdali, was the former's illiberal social policy. The Peshawas failed to build an organic social polity along with the Jats and others. Even Shivaji had to face great humiliation at the hands of local priests and ultimately a priest from Varanasi agreed to perform his coronation ceremony. The caste hostility against Shivaji and against his descendants continued in Maharashtra, and even a modern prophet of Swaraj like Bal Gangadhar Tilak was opposed to the performance of religious rites, according to the Vedas, for the Maharaja of Kolhapur, who claimed descent from Shivaji. It may be recalled here that Tilak who was not averse to using the name of Shivaji and the Shivaji Utsava for political purposes was illiberal enough to fight against the performance of religious ceremonies, according to the Vedas, for the Maharaja of Kolhapur. In this context one can realise the vast and the epochal significance of the social struggle launched by Gandhi and appreciate his truly catholic social philosophy.

The third important stage in the liberalisation of Indian social and political philosophy was reached in modern times when Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda, Vivekananda and Gandhi championed the

*cause of social reform and the emancipation of the suppressed sections. Gandhi's unremitting crusade against social inequality and the humiliating conditions to which the backward sections and the so-called untouchables were exposed in Indian society has been epoch-making. No other social prophet in the long span of India's history has been so catholic, so universal and so humane in his attitude to the untouchables as Gandhi.*

#### 4. Gandhi's Ideas of Communal Unity and Islam

Gandhi was a protagonist of the concept of common good of all the inhabitants of India because as a religious man he believed in the spiritual unity and equality of mankind. He passionately believed in Hindu-Moslem unity on moral grounds. He never made distinctions among people on racial, religious and caste grounds. His Satyagraha in South Africa was launched to redeem the civic rights of the Indian community amongst whom the Moslems constituted a majority and controlled the larger share of wealth.

Gandhi supported the Khilafat movement because he deeply felt that it (the Khilafat movement) was initiated on the grounds of restoring justice and also because it offered "an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Muslims as would not arise in a hundred years." In a letter to the Viceroy in 1920, he wrote : "I consider that, as a staunch Hindu wishing to live on terms of the closest friendship with my Mussalman countrymen, I should be an unworthy son of India if I did not stand by them in their hour of trial." His sentiments, perhaps, must have received a rude shock when Kamal Pasha abolished the Turkish Caliphate.

In retrospect, it may be said, however, that Gandhi was mistaken in supporting the Khilafat movement, because the restoration of the religious and political powers of the Turkish Sultan as the Caliph of the Moslem world would have meant the negation of the nationalist upsurge in the middle-eastern countries, especially in Syria and Iraq. It has sometimes been considered a paradox of Gandhi's political career that being a nationalist, he supported the territorial claims of a moribund imperial entity like the Ottoman Empire of the Caliph. He, however, visualized the problem only from the standpoint of the Indian Muslims.

In 1920, Gandhi had emphasized Hindu-Moslem unity as a precondition for Swaraj.<sup>13</sup> Even in 1942 he had said that Hindus and Moslems should unite on the issue of fighting for freedom. It is true that Hindu-Moslem unity, if realized, would have hastened the process of the achievement of political independence and would have negatived the cry for the partition of the country. But Gandhi did not advocate Hindu-Moslem unity mainly for social and political reasons.

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<sup>13</sup> However, in a speech at Eton, in 1931, quoted in M. Lester, *Gandhi*, p. 50, he said : "The moment the alien wedge is removed, the divided communities are bound to unite."

It had fundamental spiritual roots.<sup>14</sup> In 1924, he undertook a twenty-one day fast for Hindu-Moslem unity and claimed that the fast was dictated by God and thus was the call of the highest duty. In the eyes of God all men are equally his children and, hence, Gandhi was deeply anguished at the growing communal schism and tensions in the country.

The solution that Gandhi provided for the Hindu-Moslem problems was threefold. First, a sincere and devout understanding of the fundamental moral bases of the two religions was essential. He himself had studied the Koran. He began reading Sale's translation of the Koran in the early years of his stay in South Africa. As a student in England, Gandhi had read the chapter "The Hero as Prophet", in Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship* and "learnt of the Prophet's greatness and bravery and austere living."<sup>15</sup> In South Africa he read Washington Irving's *Life of Mahomet and his Successors*. From the chapter entitled "Comparative Study of Religions" in the *Autobiography*, it would appear that perhaps Gandhi read Carlyle's chapter on Muhammad again (?) in South Africa. According to C. F. Andrews, Muhammad's practical instinct as reformer and his monotheism have been "a constant strength and support to Mahatma Gandhi."<sup>16</sup> Andrews also mentions that to Gandhi, Ali, Hasan and Hussain were representatives of the concept of "suffering injury without retaliation." Gandhi was encouraged to find that in moments of despair and confusion, Muhammad also fasted and prayed. He admired the patriarchal simplicity of the early Caliphs of Islam.<sup>17</sup> In 1924 Gandhi wrote : "When the West was sunk in darkness a bright star rose in the eastern firmament and gave light and comfort to a groaning world. Islam is not a false religion. Let Hindus study it reverently, and they will love it even as I do." He believed that communal struggles are rooted in an insufficient understanding of the tenets of the two religions and cultures. He stated that to say that "Hinduism and Islam represent two antagonistic cultures" is a denial of God for "I believe with my whole soul that the God of the Quran is also the God of the Gita." He accepted that all the religious scriptures of the world should be studied in a spirit of genuine humility and for the sake of illumination. He disclaimed the use of religious scriptures as armoury for pugnacious disquisitions and sectarian animosities. He preached, instead, a process of "heart-unity". Gandhi's concept of equal regard for all religions brought him the lasting affection and

14 M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, (1940) : "I would like to defend both the Kashi Viswanath temple and the Jama Masjid and even St. Paul's church with my life but would not take a single life for their defence.

15 Contrast Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, (abridged by D. M. Low, New York, Washington Square Press, 1962), Vol. III, pp. 873-83. Gandhi read Gibbon's *Decline* in the Yervada Jail (1922-1924).—Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, II, p. 111.

16 C. F. Andrews, *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas*, pp. 63-64.

17 M. K. Gandhi, *Economic and Industrial Life and Relations*, Vol. III, p. 187.

esteem of men like Hakim Azmal Khan,<sup>18</sup> Abbas Tyebji, M. A. Ansari and Abdul Ghaffar Khan. In South Africa, Dada Abdullah and Ahmad Muhammad Kachhalia greatly helped him in his public activities. Mohammad Ali from the presidential chair of the Indian National Congress at Coconada, in 1923, testified to the elevation and loftiness of Gandhi's character and called him as "Our Generalissimo". It is true that with the decline of the Khilafat movement and the failure of Non-cooperation, communal struggles intensified in the country, but in spite of all opposition and ridicule, sometimes from both of the major communities, Gandhi did not lose faith in his thesis that religion does not sanction violence. Gandhi was of the view that in the Koran non-violence is sanctioned as a duty while violence is permitted only as a matter of necessity.<sup>19</sup> He sincerely hoped that a devout study of the Koran would convince even the Moslem fanatics that the essential moral and religious values and norms inculcated by Islam are the same as in all other religions. He was not tired of repeating that Islam meant peace and it had in the past liberal traditions.<sup>20</sup>

The second basic point in Gandhi's approach to the communal problem was that he pleaded for generosity on the part of the majority community.<sup>21</sup> He wrote in 1924 : "The key to the situation lies with the Hindus. We must shed timidity or cowardice. We must be brave enough to trust, and all will be well."<sup>22</sup> He did not have much patience with the attitude of bargaining. He did not subscribe to the mathematics of the exact allocation of seats and shares in strict proportion to the numbers of the members of the two communities. Instead, he wanted an attitude of generosity to be cultivated. He wrote : "I can disarm opposition only by being generous. Justice without generosity may easily become Shylock's justice."<sup>23</sup> He felt that being in a majority did impose some obligations and the majority community had to inspire the minorities with confidence in their

18 In a letter written to Hakim Ajmal Khan in 1922 (quoted in C. F. Andrews, *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas*, pp. 369-72), Gandhi wrote that he wanted "eternal friendship" between Hindus and Mussalmans. He felt that if suspicion and distrust were removed, the non-violence of the strong could be fostered.

19 *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. III, p. 349. M. K. Gandhi, *To Hindus and Muslims*, "Mussalmans are not enjoined by the Quran to sacrifice a cow. They are said to be enjoined to sacrifice certain animals, including the cow, on stated occasions. The sacrifice of the cow is not therefore obligatory."

20 M. K. Gandhi, *Collected Works*, IV, p. 376, did not believe even in 1905 that Islam was a religion of the sword. He referred to Washington Irving's view that the success of Islam was due to its "simplicity" and to its "recognition of human weaknesses."

21 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 82, felt that resistance rouses suspicion and hence wrote : *My implicit faith in non-violence does mean yielding to minorities when they are really weak. The best way to weaken communalists is to yield to them.*" "A Satyagrahi resists when there is threat of force behind obstruction." (*Our Italics*).

22 M. K. Gandhi, "Hindu-Muslim Tension", *Young India*, May 29, 1924.

23 *Harijan*, January 27, 1940.

*bona fides.* They had to adopt even an attitude of self-sacrifice. He was not tired of eulogizing the self-sacrificing martyrdom of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi in April 1931, at Kanpur, in the cause of settling Hindu-Muslim tensions and riots. Reciprocity is good, and justice as giving to every one his due is a worthy legal concept. In cases of communal tension, Gandhi himself would advocate obligatory arbitration. But as a man of religious faith, he wanted to go beyond reciprocity and legal justice. He wanted that the Hindus should embrace the Moslems as their own kith and kin. Thus in place of the political solution of the communal problem on the basis of bargaining and legal justice, Gandhi sponsored an attitude of widest generosity.

The third point in Gandhi's philosophy of communal harmony is more realistic. He stressed the dedicated pursuit of the Constructive Programme by both the communities. Such a common method of social and economic action was bound to generate in their hearts an enhanced regard for independence. The pursuit of the Constructive Programme was bound to bring together the masses and the classes, and thus foster unity of hearts based on mutual interest. Only thus could an indissoluble tie capable of withstanding the severest strains be built up. Thus it was clear that the common pursuit of the Constructive Programme as a method of Hindu-Muslim unity would generate a process of the growth of heart unity. It also involved the curbing of fanatical propaganda. It was evident that for the promotion of lasting unity what was needed was not a promulgation of a decree by the foreign government but the pursuit of the obligations of a common citizenship as implied in the Constructive Programme.

Gandhi had regarded unity between Hindus and Muslims as a matter of pre-eminent national importance. He was never tired of repeating that they were blood brothers born of the same sacred soil of Hindustan and nourished by the same water. Regarding each other as natural enemies was the denial of the central divinity lodged in the heart of all living beings. He stated that the advent of British imperialism wedded to the cult of 'divide and rule' had driven the wedge of acrimony and suspicion among them. He believed that during Muslim rule, Hindus and Muslims lived more in peace than under British rule. Once he had imagined that Hindus and Muslims living in harmony could convey the gospel of reconciliation to the world. But his hopes were dashed to the ground. Gandhi was sick and full of deep agony at the intensification of communal tensions and riots some of which could be regarded as miniature civil wars. He had fervently believed that the dedicated adherence to the Constructive Programme would release forces of unity between the two communities, but the prospects of independence intensified suspicion and hatred and brought to the fore suppressed sentiments of revenge with unparalleled ferocity and beastly savagery. Gandhi

had hoped, in 1924, that the settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question could be brought about.<sup>24</sup> Instead, the gross and perverse aspects of religious fanaticism got the better of nationalism.

24 In an article with the Caption "Hindu-Muslim Tension : Its Causes and Cure", *Young India*, May 29, 1924, Gandhi elaborately expounded the theme of communal struggles. In another article entitled "Hindu-Muslim Unity", (*Young India*, June 5, 1924), Gandhi summarized thus the causes and the cure for Hindu-Muslim tensions :

*Causes—*

1. The remote cause of the tension is the Moplah rebellion.
2. The attempt of Mr. Fazal Hussain to rearrange the distribution of posts in the education department consistently with the number of Mussalmans in the Punjab, and consequent Hindu opposition.
3. The *Shudhi* movement.
4. The most potent cause being tiredness of non-violence and the fear that the communities might, by a long course of training in non-violence, forget the law of retaliation and self-defence.
5. Mussalman cow-slaughter and Hindu music.
6. Hindu cowardice and consequent Hindu distrust of Mussalmans.
7. Mussalman bullying.
8. Mussalman distrust of Hindu fair-play.

*Cure—*

1. The master-key to the solution is the replacement of the rule of the sword by that of arbitration. Honest public opinion should make it impossible for aggrieved parties to take the law into their own hands, and every case must be referred to private arbitration or to law courts if the parties do not believe in non-cooperation.
2. Ignorant fear of cowardly non-violence, falsely so-called, taking the place of violence should be dispelled.
3. Growing mutual distrust among the leaders must, if they believe in unity, give place to trust.
4. Hindus must cease to fear the Mussalman bully, and the Mussalmans should consider it beneath their dignity to bully their Hindu brothers.
5. Hindus must not imagine that they can force Mussalmans to give up cow-sacrifice. They must trust by befriending Mussalmans, that the latter will, of their own accord, give up cow-sacrifice out of regard for their Hindu neighbours.
6. Nor must Mussalmans imagine they can force Hindus to stop music or *arti* before mosques. They must befriend the Hindus and trust them to pay heed to reasonable Mussalman sentiment.
7. The Hindus must leave to the Mussalmans and the other minorities the question of representation on elected bodies, and gracefully and whole-heartedly give effect to the findings of such referee. If I had my way I should appoint Hakim Saheb Ajmal Khan as the sole referee leaving him free to consult the Mussalmans, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, etc., as he considers best.
8. Employment under national Government must be according to merit to be decided by a board of examiners representing different communities.
9. *Shuddhi* or *tabligh* as such must not be disturbed, but either must be conducted honestly and by men of proved character. It should avoid all attack on other religions. There should be no secret propaganda and no offer of material rewards.
10. Public opinion should be so cultivated as to put under ban all the scurrilous writings principally in a section of the Punjab Press.
11. Nothing is possible without the Hindus shedding their timidity. Theirs is the largest stake and they must be prepared to sacrifice the most.

Nationalism, which is a psychological phenomenon, grows in the process of historical evolution and cannot be created merely by political pronouncements of maxims of expediency. Hence he was immensely opposed to the "Two Nation" theory propounded by M. A. Jinnah. In a letter written on September 15, 1944, to M. A. Jinnah, Gandhi stated :

"I find no parallel in history for a body of converts and their descendants claiming to be a nation apart from the parent stock. If India was one nation before the advent of Islam, it must remain one in spite of the change of faith of a very large body of her children. You do not claim to be a separate nation by right of conquest, but by reason of acceptance of Islam. Will the two nations become one if the whole of India accepted Islam ? Will Bengalis, Oriyas, Andhras, Tamilians, Maharashtrians, Gujaratis, etc., cease to have their special characteristics if all of them become converts to Islam ? These have all become one politically because they are subject to one foreign control. They are trying today to throw off that subjection. You seem to have introduced a new test of nationhood. If I accept it, I would have to subscribe to many more claims and face an insoluble problem. The only real, though lawful, test of our nationhood arises out of our common political subjection. If you and I throw off this subjection by our combined effort, we shall be born a politically free nation out of our travail. If, by then, we have not learnt to prize our freedom, we may quarrel among ourselves and, for want of a common master holding us together in his iron grip, seek to split up into small groups or nationalities."<sup>25</sup>

To the end of his life Gandhi refused to accept the "Two Nation" theory,<sup>26</sup> and was absolutely unreconciled to the "vivisection" of India. He wrote :

"The 'Two Nation' theory is an untruth. The vast majority of Muslims of India are converts to Islam or are descendants of converts. They did not become a separate nation as soon as they became converts."<sup>27</sup>

25 Gandhi-Jinnah Correspondence.

26 Gandhi, "Am I a Messenger of God", *Harijan*, Oct., 28, 1939, (*Communal Unity*, p. 236), raised some keen questions. Asked he—Are the Chinese Muslims a separate nation ? Are the Muslims of England a separate nation ? He also pointed out that if the Indian Muslims were a separate nation why not were the Indian Christians a third and the Indian Parsis a fourth nation ? "I shall love to die in the faith that it (the blending of Islam and Hinduism) must come in the fulness of time. I should be happy to think that I had done nothing to hamper the process." —(M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 1940).

27 *Harijan*, April 6, 1940.

It is thus clear that Gandhi refused to recognize religion as the sole determinant of nationality. From this it would necessarily follow that a change of faith would not lead to a change in nationality. Gandhi rightly pointed out that many of the external criteria of life were common to the Hindus and Moslems.

But he was frank and realistic enough to acknowledge that nationalism is a psychological phenomenon and so he also said : "If the vast majority of Indian Moslems feel that they are not one nation with their Hindus and other brethren, who will be able to resist them."<sup>28</sup> The true feelings of eight crores of Moslems could be found not by arbitration but only by some kind of referendum.<sup>29</sup> It was a question involving self-determination. Gandhi, however, in June, 1947, opposed referendum for determining whether the Frontier Province was to join Pakistan or to remain a part of the Indian Union.

28 *Harijan*, March 30, 1940.

29 M. K. Gandhi, *The Way to Communal Harmony*, p. 306.

# 9

## THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF GANDHI'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

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### 1. The Moral and Psychological Approach to Economics

Gandhi was influenced by the exalted life of self-abnegation of Buddha and the philosophy of *Aparigraha* of the *Bhagavadgita*, and hence he stressed non-accumulation and non-stealing. To some extent the traditional Hindu conception of the *Sannyasin* who is supposed to transcend the sentiment of egoistic attachment also influenced the personal life and conduct of Gandhi. He thoroughly believed in the ideal of non-possession or *Aparigraha*.<sup>1</sup> Tolstoy in his *What Shall We Do Then?* revealed in moving language the abject poverty, destitution and exploitation of the humble people in Moscow and pointed out that the sole method of spiritual resurrection in the context of rampant misery was to share one's possessions with one's forlorn neighbour. He thoroughly stuck to the teaching of the gospels that one's duty was to give away one of his two coats to his neighbour who had none. Gandhi had been also influenced by Tolstoy's moral approach to economics. Once he even said that Jesus Christ was the greatest economist of his time. He literally believed in the sayings of Jesus Christ and other saints including Malukadas and Rahim Khankhana that God is the supreme giver of all our requirements and hence, like birds, we should not accumulate for the morrow. He often said that a believer in God should have no worries on account of money. Gandhi had cancelled his insurance policy of Rs. 10,000/- quite early in his life because he regarded having a life insurance policy as a negation of one's earnest faith in the supreme beneficence of God.

Gandhi regarded economics as a moral science instead of a mere positive and analytical science, and felt that the renunciation of soul-destroying competition and endless wants will result in the abolition of the engines of economic destruction.<sup>2</sup> This will mean

1 M. K. Gandhi, "Non-Possession or Poverty", *From Yervada Mandir*, p. 24. (Cf. अपरिग्रहवार्ये जन्मकथन्ता सम्बोधः—Patanjali, *Yoga-Sutra*, II, 39.)

2 In an article entitled "The Doom of Peace," *Harijan*, May 16, 1936, Gandhi pleads for a renunciation of the engines of destruction. He, thus, argues :—  
(Contd.)

the substitution of false and non-human economics by true and human economics. He wrote :

“ . . . I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and therefore sinful. Thus the economics that permit one country to prey upon another are immoral.”

Gandhi condemned the “monster god of materialism”<sup>3</sup> which is more or less the foundation of most of social sciences. Hence Gandhi wanted that the rich should recognize the immanence of God in all creatures and take the initiative in voluntary dispossession with a view to the diffusion of universal contentment. According to him, God was not the friend of those who secretly coveted the wealth of others. Absolute minimization of personal wants is the correct path to the realization of God.

He also criticised the pervasive economic exploitation engineered by capitalism, but unlike the positivistic school of economics, he stressed also the psychological roots of exploitation. The malady of modern civilization is fundamentally psychological because there is an ever-expanding quest for commodities, and the greed for accumulation is insatiable. He said : “Exploitation thrives on our sins. Remove the sins and exploitation will stop.” Hankering after riches forces one to resort to exploitation in some form or the other.<sup>4</sup> The suppression of the drive towards the avaricious collection and continuous addition of capital and the negation of the monopolistic possession of things that may be and are needed by others, would alone bring into being the perfect society or *Ramraj*.

The central conception of man as a spiritual entity is dominant even in Gandhi's discussions of economic theory. His economic theory is rooted in his stress on the replacement of greed and accumulation by generosity and love, and he sincerely wanted that justice should be done to the millions and they should be given their ‘due’. He pleaded for simplicity because he considered the propensity towards the acquisition of private wealth as devil. He, consequently, advocated “a wise regulation of riches and absolute social justice.” He was emphatic on assuring to the labourer a daily wage and wanted to remove drudgery from his work. He was keen on providing to the toiling millions a standard wage or a living wage.

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- (a) Renunciation of the engines of destruction  
                  requires
  - (b) Renunciation of imperialism. This, in its turn,  
                  requires
  - (c) Renunciation of soul-destroying competition and multiplication of wants.

3 M. K. Gandhi's Speech on “Economic Vs. Moral Progress”,—Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. I, p. 196.

4 M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, July 21, 1946, reproduced in *Towards Non-Violent Socialism*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1951), p. 149.

## 2. Ruskin's Influence on Gandhi

With the advance of capitalistic industrialism in the West, there appeared two pronounced theoretical standpoints in economics. The positivists championed the cult of self-preservation and self-interest. They felt that the pursuit of self-interest on the basis of rational economic calculation produces the common good. Locke, Adam Smith, Ricardo and Jeremy Bentham were the principal advocates of this school. There was a second school which challenged the foundations of a pure positivistic theory of economic action. John Ruskin and Leo Tolstoy were the leaders in advocating the extension of the normative valuational standpoint even in economic action. Gandhi's economic philosophy is inspired by John Ruskin (1819-1900).<sup>5</sup> Gandhi read Ruskin's *Unto This Last* in a train journey from Johannesburg to Durban in 1904 and was immensely inspired, almost "captured", by this book.

He stated in the preface to the abridged Gujarati version which he (Gandhi) prepared of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* that the latter expounds and extends the ideas of Socrates. Ruskin indicates how they who accept the ideas of Socrates should behave and act in the different professions. But this statement of Gandhi that Ruskin expounds and elaborates the ideas of Socrates has not been developed by him. It is a problem for further research. Ruskin also challenged the assumptions of modern political economy<sup>6</sup> which is founded on an "ossifiant theory of progress"<sup>7</sup> conceived almost on the negation of the human soul. He, on the other hand, regarded the worker as "an engine whose motive power is a soul."<sup>8</sup> Hence he advocated the moralization of commerce and suggested that even the merchant should be ready to die for the nation. Instead of the contractual conception of economic relationships, Ruskin proposed a genuine familialistic approach. He said "...treat the servant kindly without any economical purpose and all economical purposes will be answered; in this, as in all other matters, whosoever will save his life shall lose it, who so loses it shall find it."<sup>9</sup>

5 John Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, (1860); *Munera Pulveris*, (1862).

6 Ruskin wrote in *Unto This Last*, pp. 132-33 : "Whereas riches are a power like that of electricity acting only through inequalities or negations of itself. The force of the guinea you have in your pocket depends wholly on the default of a guinea in your neighbour's pocket. If he did not want it, it would be of no use to you; the degree of power it possesses depends accurately upon the need or desire he has for it,—and the act of making yourself rich, in the ordinary mercantile economist's sense, is therefore equally and necessarily the act of keeping your neighbour poor."

7 Ruskin, "The Roots of Honour", *Unto This Last*, p. 116.

8 Ruskin, "The Roots of Honour", *Unto This Last*, wrote that "the largest quantity of work will be done only when the motive force, that is to say, the will or spirit of the creature, is brought to its greatest strength by its own proper fuel; namely by the affection."

9 John Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, p. 120.

In the chapter entitled "The Roots of Honour", in his *Unto This Last*, Ruskin mentioned five professions :—

- (i) Soldiers — to defend the nation.
- (ii) Pastors — to teach the nation.
- (iii) Lawyers — to enforce justice.
- (iv) Physicians — to keep it in health.
- (v) Merchants — to provide for it.

Ruskin stated that the duty of all these men is to die for the nation if need arises.

Gandhi learnt from *Unto This Last* three basic ideas :

- "(i) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
- (ii) That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.<sup>10</sup>
- (iii) That a life of labour, *i.e.*, the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living."

Gandhi says in his *Autobiography* that he had known the first principle. He had a dim realization also of the second, but he candidly states that he had no awareness of the superiority of the life of the labourer on the soil and the handicraftsman to other modes of existence. So immediate and deep was the inner response of Gandhi to the teachings of Ruskin that he soon established the Phoenix Settlement in 1904, near Durban. Its establishment is a vindication of the seriousness with which Gandhi accepted the economic philosophy of Ruskin. He himself says : "I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice." Absolutely simple life with premium on physical labour was the guiding principle of this Settlement. From there the *Indian Opinion* began to be published. In the establishment of this Settlement, Gandhi received co-operation from Rustomji, Albert West, and his cousins Chhaganlal and specially Maganlal Gandhi. In 1913, the Phoenix Settlement was converted into a public trust.

Gandhi, from the very beginning of his mature life, had a pronouncedly spiritual and moral approach to problems, and his "anti-chrematistics"<sup>11</sup> tendencies which were born out of his spiritual orientation to life were reinforced by his studies of Ruskin. Although like the Hindu philosophers Manu, Bhism and Sukra, Gandhi did not negate the significance of *Artha*, he was categorically opposed to

10 Ruskin, "The Roots of Honour", *Unto This Last*, wrote : "... the best labour always has been, and is, as labour ought to be, paid by an invariable standard."

11 The word "chrematistics" occurs in Aristotle's *Politics*. According to Aristotle, Economics is the science which deals with wealth regarded as an instrument of noble and virtuous action. But Economics degenerates into chrematistics when it is concerned with the accumulation of wealth for its own sake.

the preponderance of the economic factor in life. Like Aristotle, Gandhi regarded economics as an instrument for moral action and not as a good in itself. In place of personal satisfaction he put forward the ideal of collective good. He repudiated unequivocally the explanation of human history and individual motivation solely in terms of the economic calculus as is fashionable in some schools of western economics. Both Gandhi and Ruskin are certainly very realistic in stressing that the wealth of a nation consists not in the accumulation of external commodities but in the growth and development of a strong and healthy population. A hardy and sturdy population which can suffer for the country is its greatest asset. Hence Ruskin was interested in having ‘full-breathed, bright-eyed and happy-hearted human creatures.’ Gandhi also was never tired of repeating that the sinews of India’s wealth consisted in its unutilized man-power and held that India’s vast labour-force was the greatest capital that the country had in its possession.

### 3. Gandhi’s Critique of Capitalism

Gandhi condemned the nineteenth century doctrine of *laissez-faire* which is the political basis of capitalism. He was pained to find that many cloth merchants still “parade the doctrine of individual freedom.”<sup>12</sup> He refused to attribute any “prescriptive” title either to capitalists or the land-holders. He was, thus, a critic of capitalism and was unreconciled to the capitalist system of production and technological growth. He criticized the iniquities of capitalism at a time when the capitalist economy had not yet become the dominant aspect of the total economy in India and that indicates his foresight.

He was opposed to capitalism on three fundamental grounds. A dominant factor for his hostility was that it was based on violence. The concentration and centralization of capital result in strengthening the engines of violence of the richer section and, thus, they intensify the process of exploitation of labourers. The labour-force was the most vital factor in production. The exploitation of the labouring sections repelled him. Hence, in Ahmedabad, he organized one of the most powerful unions of textile workers in the country to strengthen the cause of the labourers. He wrote :

“Labour was far superior to capital. Without labour gold, silver and copper were a useless burden. It was labour which extracted precious ore from the bowels of the earth. He could quite conceive labour existing without metal. Labour was priceless, not gold. He wanted marriage between capital and labour. They could work wonders in co-operation. But that could happen only when labour was intelligent enough to co-operate with itself and then offer co-operation with capital on terms of honourable equality.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Young India*, March 19, 1931.

<sup>13</sup> *Hrujan*, September 7, 1947.

Secondly, he criticized the accumulation of capital as immoral because it was radically antithetical to the concept of *Aparigraha*. Accumulation, in any form, as Gandhi points out in the *Mangal-Prabhata*, was a kind of theft. It was also an indication of one's lack of faith in the encompassing goodness of the supreme divine being. He stated that a repudiation of the exploitationist basis of capitalism necessarily meant the acceptance of a philosophy of "juster distribution of the products of labour."<sup>14</sup> And that implied the voluntary acceptance of simplicity and contentment.

A third basic evil of capitalism is the intensification of social polarization between the two opposed social classes—the capitalists and the labourers. This results in strikes, lockouts, sabotage, and there is a marked decline of social spirit. Gandhi felt that in his ideal state this social antagonism would be replaced by increasing co-operation and mutual reciprocity. The problems of social tensions and struggles were bound to assume a different character in a non-violent state. Gandhi wrote : "Quarrels between labour and capital and strikes will be few and far between in a non-violent state, because the influence of the non-violent majority will be so great as to command the respect of the principal elements in society."<sup>15</sup>

Gandhi was a critic not only of capitalism based on the private ownership of the means of production, but also of state capitalism. He felt that the violence of private ownership would be less injurious than that of the state which is a far more gigantic entity.<sup>16</sup> State capitalism, therefore, could not provide the remedy for social and economic evils. Between state capitalism and private capitalism, Gandhi regarded the latter as the lesser evil. He was opposed, however, to capitalism in all its phases. Hence, instead of the centralization of power under a monocratic state capitalism, he favoured the extension of the sense of trusteeship.

Towards the end of his life, Gandhi became more trenchant in his criticism of capitalism.<sup>17</sup> But he would not sanction the forcible overthrow of capitalism. He claimed to fight capitalism in his own way. He stated that he wanted to end capitalism almost, if not quite as much as, the most advanced socialists and communists. Certainly, the Gandhian technic of ending the evils of capitalism would be different from the methods and instruments of the extreme advocates

14 *Young India*, September 3, 1925.

15 *Harijan*, September 1, 1940.

16 Gandhi pointed out (N. K. Bose, "An Interview with M. Gandhi", *Modern Review*, October, 1935) : "It is my firm conviction that if the state suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time. What I would personally prefer, would be, not a centralization of power in the hands of the state but an extension of the sense of trusteeship ; as in my opinion, the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the state. However, if it is unavoidable, I would support a minimum of state ownership."

17 M. K. Gandhi, "No Moral Right to Capital". *Harijan*, February 16, 1947.

of forcible expropriation. There is no place in Gandhian economic thought for the operations of a "vanguard" of trained proletarian workers for the conquest of the bourgeois state and effectuating the expropriation of the expropriated.

Gandhi was a spiritual idealist, but his position with regard to property as indicated in his critique of capitalism is much more radical than that of the Western Hegelian idealists who regard property as the objectivization of personality and a means to virtuous life. T. H. Green argued for differential possession of property because of the different material requirements for the expression of personality. Gandhi, to the contrary, sincerely believed that personality is realized not by the accumulation but by the renunciation of property. But although more radical than Hegel and Green, Gandhi is a conservative in comparison to Plato and Rousseau because in the *Republic* and in the *Discourse on Inequality* the latter condemns private property. Plato, in the *Republic*, absolutely condemned private property for the two higher sections, and he proposed to divest the guardians and auxiliaries of all property. Hence he was at least a half-communist. Gandhi never did go to that extreme. The latter was opposed to the concept of communism as the alternative to capitalism. As a believer in simplicity, however, he would like the people to have only some amount of property for use.

#### 4. Theory of Trusteeship

The conception of trusteeship is old and is to be traced to St. Ambrose and other patristic philosophers, but Gandhi got it from books of jurisprudence. He discovered great similarity in the conception of *Aparigraha* (non-possession) of the Gita and Snell's discussion of the maxims of equity.<sup>18</sup>

With the passage of time, Gandhi went on adding an economic and sociological content to the rather moralistic conception of trusteeship. He stated that in case the rich would not become willing trustees, Satyagraha was to be resorted to against the holders of wealth. In 1938, he said, "A trustee has no heir but the public."<sup>19</sup> This implies that the community or the state has also a right in the property of the moneyed classes.

He received corroboration of his views from the idealism of the *Ishopanishad* which inculcated that things of the world should be enjoyed by renunciation. With reference to the *tena tyaktena bhunjithah* of the *Isha Upanishad*, Gandhi wrote: "It is the surest way to evolve a new order of life of universal benefit in place of the present one where each one lives for himself .... To enjoy life one should give

18 In the Chapter entitled "Result of Introspection" in his *Autobiography*, Gandhi says: "My regard for jurisprudence increased, I discovered in it religion." The word *Aparigraha* occurs in the *Bhagavadgita*, VI, 10.

19 *Harijan*, April 13, 1938.

up the lure of life. That should be the part of our nature.”<sup>20</sup> Gandhi wanted that the rich should become trustees of their surplus wealth for the good of society. Thus the society was to be regarded only as an extension of the family.

In 1946, a far more radical draft of “State-regulated trusteeship” was prepared. Gandhi had seen the draft and made a few changes. Hence the following may be taken as embodying his latest views in the matter :

“(i) Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.

(ii) It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except inasmuch as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.

(iii) It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.

(iv) Thus under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interest of society.

(v) Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that could be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time, so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.

(vi) Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.”

## 5. Critique of Machinery and Industrialism

The advance of the Industrial Revolution in the West brought new hopes and fears. Some teachers felt that the harnessing of machine-power would bring in the New Jerusalem and man will have the blessings of freedom and abundance. Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* recognized that capitalism and industrialism had to their credit more gigantic wonders than the Egyptian pyramids and the Roman aqueducts. Marx hoped that the advance of technological industrialization would reduce the working-hours of labourers and thus make possible the transition from freedom to necessity.

But Leo Tolstoy sounded a different note. In his *What Shall We Do Then?*, he categorized the grave evils of machinery and indus-

<sup>20</sup> *Harijan*, 1940.

trialism. The supporters of industrialism, Tolstoy pointed out, refer to the facilities of transport and cheap cloth rendered possible for the workers. But he feelingly stated that the railways have resulted in the destruction of the forests where the labourers once used to work. Furthermore, the railway industry has led to the enormous increase of the distance of the place where the labourers work from their homes. It may be true that steam engines and machines have brought cheap cloth to the worker, but have not these snatched from him his source of livelihood and rendered him the slave of the factory proprietors ? It is correct that the workers can also take advantage of telegraphs but does he have the money to utilize them ? Furthermore, before the workers can come to know of the fluctuations in the prices of the commodities in their possession, the capitalists, through telegraphic services, know of such rise and fall and buy these objects at a cheap rate and thus amass profits by selling them at higher prices Hence, Tolstoy denounced modern industrialism because, in his opinion, it was gravely disadvantageous for the workers. Gandhi's opinions regarding machinery and industrialism as stated in the *Hind-Swaraj* are very similar to Tolstoy's denunciations.

In the South African period, Gandhi was far more critical of the machine civilization than in the later period. He was trenchantly hostile to machines in the *Hind-Swaraj* and considered them to be a "snake-pit". But even in that classic work he did not advocate the immediate destruction of machines. But certainly, he categorically denied that the machine could produce any good.<sup>21</sup> It led to the slavery of the labourers both male and female because it took away from them (the labouring population) their traditional means of subsistence. Thus it deprived them of the source of livelihood. It also led to private monopoly because it resulted in the concentration of wealth in the hands of a small section of population. He wrote : "Today it is used to pour wealth in the hands of the chosen few. Little attention is paid to the crores of people from whom the machine snatches away their bread."<sup>22</sup>

Thus, like Marx, who formulated the theory of technological unemployment or the industrial reserve army, Gandhi condemned

21 In the *Hind-Swaraj*, *op. cit.*, p. 94, Gandhi wrote that the building of Manchester in India led to great exploitation.

22 Gandhi wrote : "I consider it a sin and injustice to use machinery for the purpose of concentrating power and riches in the hands of the few. Today the machine is used in this way....we should not substitute lifeless machines for the living machines scattered over the seven lakhs villages of India. The machine is well used if it aids man's labour and simplifies it. Today it is used to pour wealth in the pockets of the chosen few. Little attention is paid to crores of people from whom the machine snatches away their bread.....I have no objection if all things required by my country could be produced with the labour of 30,000 instead that of three crores. But those three crores must not be rendered idle or unemployed."—(Quoted in *Gandhiji*, 75th Birthday Volume for M. Gandhi, *op. cit.*, p. 110).

machines on the ground that they lead to unemployment. Marx was opposed only to the private ownership of the means of production. He condemned the use of property as a means to power over other human beings. But Gandhi criticised the mechanical civilization itself and not merely the private ownership of the machines as means of production. He condemned the railways in the *Hind-Swaraj* because through them moral corruption spreads in different places. He also pointed out that the railways were introduced by the British in India not to serve popular interests but to be the foundation of the edifice of British imperialism by making possible the quick movement of troops. Thus he is opposed to technological civilization both on economic and moral grounds. Hence he emphatically declared that the salvation for Indian civilization consisted in India forgetting everything that she had learnt from the West.

But with the passage of time, Gandhi's attitude became more realistic. He was no longer a complete ruralist advocating an unmitigated return to village Arcadianism. During the course of years there was a gradual transition from the exalted heights of the utopian and unpractical ideas of the *Hind-Swaraj* to the more cautious realism of his articles in the *Harijan*, in the forties. Thus, later on, we find him realistic enough, at least in the context of the future Indian society, to advocate the reconciliation of large-scale and small-scale industries as well as the nationalization of key-industries.<sup>23</sup> If there were to be established some factories for producing essential commodities, Gandhi wanted them to be nationalized and not to be retained under private ownership because that would result in the exploitation of the labourers. Thus his more sober view on the subject was that he wanted not to destroy machines but to impose limitations and restrictions on their use. If machines could be used to lighten the labour of the vast number of workers and millions of other people, he would have no opposition to them. Gandhi's fundamental opposition lay only to the irrational craze for machinery.<sup>24</sup> He could not see much logic in piling labour-saving devices. He stated that the machine should not tend to atrophy the limbs of human beings. But he was not opposed to those machines which

<sup>23</sup> *Towards Non-Violent Socialism*, op. cit., p. 29

<sup>24</sup> Gandhi wrote : "How can I be against all machinery when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery ? The spinning-wheel is a machine ; a little toothpick is a machine. What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind but for all. I want the concentration of wealth not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today, machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might. The machine should not tend to atrophy the limbs of man.... Factories run by power-driven machinery should be nationalized, state-controlled. The supreme consideration is man."

do not create or protract the under-employment of the wage-earners and which can be driven not by mechanical power but by hands and feet. He was not even opposed to rural electrification. He wrote : "If we should have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the state would own power-houses just as they have their grazing pastures." He felt that there was a possibility involved in rural electrification to combine rural and urban patterns of action and behaviour because electricity would make possible the deconcentration of industry over large areas and would consequently eliminate the necessity of huge urban establishments.<sup>25</sup> Thus, although in the *Hind-Swaraj*, Gandhi appears to be a ruralist, in his later writings in the *Young India* and the *Harijan*, the primitivism and archaism of the earlier period has slowly given way to a more cautious realism. Thus, it appears that, later on, he was only opposed to the exploitationist perversities of modern engineering and technology.

With the encountering of diverse experiences in later life, Gandhi made greater concessions to the pressing demands of the social and economic reality. He came to realise that the absolute neutralization of the machine civilization was an impossibility. Hence his later and more mature view about machines was that "the heavy machinery for work of public utility....has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the state and used entirely for the benefit of the people." Hence the concessions that Gandhi finally made to machines were based on threefold reservations : (i) nationalization of key-industries, (ii) the dispersion of the centres of industrial production, and (iii) production not for private accumulation but for social service. Thus, it is evident that from the extreme ruralism represented in the *Hind-Swaraj* to the later concept of nationalization of key-industries as represented in the articles of the *Harijan*, Gandhism undergoes a long period of transition and evolution.

But it remains certain, nevertheless, that in the Gandhian theory of economics technological rationality is never a dominant category. His fundamental ideal is limitation of wants and not the creation of a gigantic machine civilization. His basic theme is never the accentuation of production and the economy of plethoric abundance, but the traditional religious notion that accumulation of wealth is a bar to moral life. Hence Gandhi advocated the limitation of acquisitiveness and the consequent moralization of group living. His attachment to village industries and Khadi was intense and deep. He had, hence, a strong fear and suspicion that the India of the

25 Charles Fourier also contemplated the dispersion of huge urban centres and wanted the construction of phalansteries which were to be villages with a population of 1,500 people.

future might become a highly militarized and industrialized country and that might result in the submergence or even elimination of village industries and Khadi which, to Gandhi, were symbols of non-violence. Hence, even in his later days, he stood for only a limited degree of machine civilization.

## 6. Rural Economy and Land-Ownership

Gandhi believed that the devastating impact of British imperialist expansion had threatened the very existence of the village economy. Free trade had destroyed India's cottage industry and hence ruined the peasantry.<sup>26</sup> He said :

"Before the British advent, India spun and wove, in her millions of cottages, just the supplement she needed for adding to her meagre agricultural resources. This cottage industry, so vital for India's existence, has been ruined by incredibly heartless and inhuman processes, as described by English witnesses. Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realize that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures, can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity, which is perhaps unequalled in history."<sup>27</sup>

Gandhi, thus, bitterly protested against the grievous wrong of the rampant rural exploitation carried under the British regime, and he held the British Government and the Indian town-dwellers responsible for "this unequalled crime against humanity" perpetrated on the semi-starved masses of India slowly sinking down to desperation.

There is a deep element of agrarian concern in Gandhi for ending this regime of oppression and untold misery. He had the insight to realize that the emancipation of India could never be brought about by the reform of the towns alone. Rural rehabilitation was essential if the standard of lives of the people was to be raised. Hence he turned his attention to the villages. The basic theme in his economic philosophy is that he stood for safeguarding

26 Hence Gandhi was a protectionist. Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings*, p. 178 : "England had sinned against India by forcing free trade upon her. It may have been food for her but it has been poison for this country."

27 Mahatma Gandhi's Trial Speech, 1922.

the integrity and foundations of the village<sup>28</sup> because his heart was deeply anguished to see their disintegration and utter ruin.<sup>29</sup> In words reminiscent of Dadabhai Naoroji's concept of drain, Gandhi referred to the suffering and exploitation of Indian villages as "the bleeding process that has gone on for the past two hundred years." His heart bled to see the misery of the Indian villagers and he formulated his famous "Constructive Programme", a considerable number of whose categories are relevant to them. The constituent categories of the Constructive Programme<sup>30</sup> are :

- (i) Communal Unity.
- (ii) Removal of Untouchability.
- (iii) Prohibition.
- (iv) Khadi.
- (v) Other Rural Industries.
- (vi) Village Sanitation.
- (vii) Nai Talim or Basic Education.
- (viii) Adult Education.
- (ix) Uplift of Women.
- (x) Education in Health and Hygiene.
- (xi) Propagation of *Rastrabhasa* or national language (Hindustani).
- (xii) Love of one's Language (*Swabhasa-prema*).
- (xiii) Economic Equality.
- (xiv) Uplift of Kisan.
- (xv) Uplift of Labour.
- (xvi) Uplift of Adivasis.
- (xvii) Help to Lepers.
- (xviii) Duties of Students.

Gandhi prescribed a thorough improvement in the life of the simple peasant. He was an eloquent prophet of cottage industries because he felt that they eliminate the evils of industrialization without, at the same time, producing any class-war. He wrote :

"And all this [efficient cottage industries] would be accomplished without the horror of bloody class-war or a colossal capital expenditure such as would be involved in the mechanization of a vast continent like India. Nor would it entail a helpless dependence on foreign imported machinery or technical skill."

28 Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan*, January 28, 1939 : "Under my scheme nothing will be allowed to be produced by cities which can be equally well produced by the villages. The proper function of cities is to serve as clearing-houses for village products."

29 *Young India*, October 13, 1921.

30 Gandhi wrote (*Harijan*, 1940) : "He who has no belief in the Constructive Programme has, in my opinion, no concrete feeling for the starved millions . . . In actual practice the expansion of my non-violence has kept exact pace with that of my identification with starved humanity."

Rural economy, if strengthened by the dedicated pursuit of the Constructive Programme, would altogether eliminate exploitation and is meant to provide genuine happiness.

Gandhi felt that India lived in the villages. He preached, hence, "the gospel of rural-mindedness."<sup>31</sup> A rural economy of self-contained villages alone could be the basis of a non-violent society. He stated in the *Harijan* : "You have therefore to be rural-minded before you can be non-violent, and to be rural-minded you have to have faith in the spinning-wheel."<sup>32</sup> He felt that small communities moulding their life on the basis of voluntary co-operation would be the best environment for the extinction of exploitation. The regeneration of India he felt to be impossible without village reconstruction. Hence his slogan "Back to the Village" was not a reactionary trend. The growth of big megalopolitan centres has been also sometimes condemned in the West because the vast concentration of populations in a small area is an undesirable phenomenon both from the economic and moral points of view.

Like some of the western sociologists, who accept the necessity of small units of production and governance, Gandhi felt that a strengthened and economically sound village economy would revitalize Indian democracy. He wrote : "Over 75 per cent of the population are agriculturists. But there cannot be much spirit of self-government about us if we take away or allow others to take away from them almost the whole of the results of their labour." In small self-sufficient villages producing mostly for their consumption, a peaceful life devoted to the pursuit of democratic values was possible. Big urban concentrations, on the other hand, result in the monopolization and accumulation of wealth by a minority. Economic centralization is bound to lead to political centralization. Centralization, in its turn, supports violence. He was of the definite opinion that non-violence could be realized not on the basis of a factory civilization but only on that of self-contained villages. Hence in order to foster the democratic notion of decentralization, which is integrally linked up with non-violence, it was essential to promote the self-sufficient small-scale economy of the villages. Gandhi's keenness about the economic roots of Swaraj is, thus, pronounced.

Towards the later part of his life Gandhi became more radical in his ideas with regard to land-ownership. He wrote :

"Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught 'All land belongs to Gopala,' where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of that line, and he can therefore unmake it. Gopala literally means shepherd ; it also means God. In modern language it means the state, i.e.,

<sup>31</sup> *Harijan*, May 16, 1936.

<sup>32</sup> *Harijan*, November 1939, p. 331.

the people. That the land today does not belong to the people is too true. But the fault is not in the teaching. It is in us who have not lived up to it . . . I have no doubt that we can make as good an approach to it as is possible for any nation, not excluding Russia.”<sup>33</sup>

He advocated the revolutionary doctrine that “Land belongs to him who tills it.”<sup>34</sup> This radical notion regarding the legal right of the tillers to land, is far more in advance of the earlier doctrine of Gandhi regarding landlords being the trustees for the tenants. In a speech at the Federal Structure Committee of the Second Round Table Conference, in 1931, Gandhi had said : “There is no desire on the part of the Congress, and there is no desire on the part of these dumb paupers to dispossess landlords of their possessions”, but they would have landlords to act as trustees for the tenants.<sup>35</sup> In 1934, also, he had told the landlords that if their rights were threatened he would side with them. Even in 1940, Gandhi only pleaded for the moderate device of the evacuation of the land belonging to the tyrant. He wrote :

“I would unhesitatingly advise tenants to evacuate the land belonging to a tyrant. That would be like giving your cloak also when only the coat is demanded. To take what is required may be profitable, to have more given to you is highly likely to be a burden. To overload a stomach is to court slow death. A zamindar wants his rent, he does not want his land. It would be a burden on him when he does not want it.”<sup>36</sup>

Even in “draft of instructions” prepared in August, 1942, the peasants were asked to pay the revenue to the landlords. But with political independence in sight, Gandhi thoroughly advanced in the direction of radicalism and he was thinking, in 1946, in terms of the capture of land by peasants if the landlords refused to capitulate.<sup>37</sup> But, nevertheless, it has to be pointed out that despite his concern for the interests and rights of the peasants, Gandhi would not sanction any organized revolutionary onslaught on the feudal landlords and the bourgeoisie. His pre-eminent dedication was to the cause of the emancipation of the country from the iron chains of a foreign imperialism, and it is possible that he might have argued within himself that after political freedom had been realized, the suppressed sections would naturally assert their rights to land.

33 Quoted in *Gandhiji*, (75th Birthday Volume for M. Gandhi), pp. 111-12.

34 *Harijan*, March 31, 1946.

35 *Young India*, October 8, 1931. For an attempt to reconcile the two points of view see *Towards Non-Violent Socialism*, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

36 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 375.

37 Ruskin also had favoured the nationalization of land, mines and waterfalls.

## 7. The Economics of Khadi

Gandhi stood for the revival and rejuvenation of the Indian village communities. This demanded the cultivation of village industries and especially of Khadi. Furthermore, Khadi was the symbol of Swadeshi, and Gandhi pleaded for complete Swadeshi or cent per cent Swadeshi. He stressed the revival of the Charkha as a counterpoise to the British monopoly in textiles. He pleaded for the fostering of spinning and handloom industry. The importance of Khadi and the spinning-wheel dawned on him as early as 1908. For the economic rehabilitation of the villages, with his blessings, the Village Industries Association and, in 1925, the All-India Spinners' Association had been started.

To him the Charkha meant not the symbol of crudeness but the dynamic means and instrument of helping our people in at least getting the barest morsel of food. It was to supplement their meagre income from cultivation.

But Khadi, as viewed by Gandhi, was not only an economic but also a political phenomenon. He had an absolute belief in the conception that the universal adoption of Khaddar by Indians was equivalent to the acquisition of Swaraj. Daily spinning on the wheel was a symbolical offering of dedication to India. Khadi was also the symbol of the unity of India. Hence spinning was a daily sacrament and a concrete visible technic of participation in this *Yajna* for the unification and revivification of India. Furthermore, Khadi was a potent instrument of mass uplift and mass education. The spinning-wheel, therefore, was a divine instrument<sup>38</sup> and one calculated to satisfy the needs of the meanest and humblest of human beings.

Furthermore, the Charkha, as he viewed it, was not only calculated to offer immediate economic advantages<sup>39</sup> to the poor weavers but also symbolised the sentiment of protest against the machine civilization. Its use indicated an attempt to eliminate the exclusiveness and the exploitationist character of modern machinery. It also symbolised the dignity of human labour. In immensely powerful words, Gandhi wrote :

“Give them (the labourers) work that they may eat ! ‘Why should I, who have no need to work for food, spin ?’ may be the question asked. Because I am eating what does not belong to me. I am living on the spoliation of my countrymen. Trace the source of every coin that finds its way into your pocket, and you will realize the truth of what I write.

<sup>38</sup> Once Gandhi said : “It is because I see in the spinning-wheel the hand of God working” . . .

<sup>39</sup> Jan Romein, *The Asian Century*, (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1962), is, in my opinion, grossly mistaken when he says : “But his (Gandhi’s) economic theories meant a flight back to the past and were hardly of this world.”

Everyone must spin. Let Tagore spin like the others. Let him burn his foreign clothes ; that is the duty today. God will take care of the morrow. As it says in the Gita, do right !”<sup>10</sup>

For the organization of the production and distribution of Khadi, he wanted the full implementation of decentralization. He wanted the various provinces to organize their Khadi work at the provincial level and thus be not dependent on the all-India body. Attempts were to be made to sell all the Khadi produced in the villages near about the places of production. It would be contravening the principle of decentralization to attempt the sale of Khadi only in the big cities. Successful Khadi work did imply that no district should depend on another. Nor must it enter into competition with another district. The Khadi spirit was also to promote the instinct of service. Purity of Khadi, living wage for the workers and non-profligacy were absolutely essential. These could not go along with a desire for accumulation of profit. A centralizing and profit-making<sup>11</sup> spirit could not be congruous with non-violence and dedication to the cause of the nation. Gandhi repeatedly said that centralization necessarily leads to the enshrinement of violence. Hence in the production and sale of Khadi he wanted decentralization. This decentralization, leading to the elimination of the control of the All-India Spinners' Association, would prepare the country for the pursuit of decentralization in other fields.

### **8. Gandhi's Theory of Ethical Socialism**

In 1916, Gandhi, in a speech at Madras, had denied being a socialist and stated that dispossession of the properties of the owners would be against the spirit of *Ahimsa*. He stated :

“I am no socialist, and I do not want to dispossess those who have got possessions ; but I do say that personally those of us who want to see light out of darkness have to follow this rule (*Asteya*).”<sup>42</sup> “I do not want to dispossess anybody ; I should be then departing from the rule of non-violence. If somebody else possesses more than I do, let him. But so far as my own life has to be regulated I dare not possess anything which I do not want.”

In a statement issued on September 17, 1934, while welcoming the formation of the Socialist group, some of whose members were self-sacrificing people, Gandhi affirmed his fundamental differences with the programme of the Indian Socialist Party and even stated that if the socialists would gain ascendancy in the Congress he would not

40 M.K. Gandhi, “The Great Sentinel”, *Young India*, October 13, 1921.

41 M.K. Gandhi, *Khadi*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1955), p. 171 : “There is acute rivalry among all those engaged in Khadi work. Even institutions indulge in a lot of profit-making.”

42 *Speeches and Writings*, p. 159.

remain in it (the Congress). He, however, assured that he would not be in active opposition to the socialist-dominated Congress. Even in 1940, he said that socialization cannot solve the evils generated by modern industrialism.<sup>43</sup>

But in his own way he was a socialist in spirit.<sup>44</sup> Sometimes he claimed to be a socialist even while he was in South Africa. Several of the social and economic practices of the Phoenix Farm established, in 1904, by him in South Africa, are socialistic in orientation. It was a big international family constituted by members belonging to different races who were fed by a common kitchen. Kallanbach who was a Jew was an important member of this group. It was managed by the labour of all the members voluntarily given according to capacity. Regardless of colour or political nationality, every person working in the press at Phoenix was to get a living wage of three pounds. The land round the press had been parcelled out in pieces of three acres each to enable every one to live by manual labour. Gandhi himself had one such piece.

Gandhi was, to a great extent, an ethical and a humanitarian socialist. He stressed the concepts of mutual trust, love and confidence. He claimed to befriend even his enemies and this spirit of universal good-will and compassion is socialistic, according to him. He believed in winning the love and affection even of his opponents. He felt that all the members who constitute the community are fraternally related. This also is a socialistic idea, according to Gandhi, because, socialism, as he interpreted it, is an extension of brotherly ethic. Bread labour is also an aspect of socialism, according to Gandhi. He used to work for several years among the labourers and this spirit of equalitarianism demonstrated through participation in physical labour is also socialistic. He was not an intellectual or philosopher teaching socialism from Olympian heights but concretely embodied the socialist ideal of humanism and fraternity. His entire personal life was built on the philosophy of *Asteya* and *Aparigraha*. A Godward life necessitated the minimum of personal possessions. One who had a load of commodities could not receive spiritual illumination.

It could be incorrect, however, to regard Gandhi as a mere philosophical and utopian socialist in spite of his supreme concern for the personal regeneration of man as the prior condition for the uplift of society. Towards the latter part of his life, there was

43 Gandhi wrote in the *Harajan*, September 20, 1940 : "Pandit Nehru wants industrialization because he thinks that, if it is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that the evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them."

44 In 1936, in his *Autobiography*, p. 517, Jawaharlal Nehru stated that Gandhi's outlook was far removed from the socialistic. He wrote : "The promise of socialism therefore holds no attraction for him, and capitalism is only partly tolerable because it circumscribes the evil of modern civilization."

evidenced in Mahatma Gandhi's thought, an increasing radicalism and he even accepted some of the key-concepts of the theory of socialism. Swaraj, he had said, could not be complete unless the lowest and the humblest sections got "all the ordinary amenities of life that a rich man enjoys." Hence in the Gandhian conception of socialism, the prince and the peasant, the poor and the rich, the employer and the employee were to be treated equally. He also claimed to be a traditional Hindu socialist believing that all land belongs to Gopal or God, or in modern terms to the people or to the state.<sup>45</sup> He also tended to the acceptance of nationalization of basic industries.<sup>46</sup> He wrote :

"At the same time I believe that some key-industries are necessary. I do not believe in arm-chair or armed socialism. I believe in action according to my belief, without waiting for wholesale conversion. Hence, without having to enumerate key-industries, I would have State ownership, where a large number of people have to work together. The ownership of the products of their labour, whether skilled or unskilled, will vest in them through the State. But as I can conceive such a State only based on non-violence, I would not dispossess moneyed men by force but would invite their co-operation in the process of conversion to State ownership. There are no pariahs of society, whether they are millionaires or paupers."

True socialism was to be attained not by the conquest of political power by an organized party or by insurrection. The socialism which Gandhi wanted was to begin with the moral regeneration of the individual. Speaking at the Delhi Provincial Political Conference on July 2, 1947, he said that people could be converted to socialism by "personal example".

"Socialism begins with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeroes to the one and the first zero will account for ten, and every addition will account for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginner is a zero, in other words, no one makes the beginning, multiplicity of zeroes will also produce zero value. Time and paper occupied in writing zeroes will be so much a waste."<sup>47</sup>

Socialism is as pure as crystal and hence it requires crystal-like means to achieve it. Therefore it was of the utmost importance that socialists should be truthful, non-violent, self-abnegating and pure-hearted. They could effect a genuine transformation by the impact of personal character. The emphasis in the Gandhian scheme of

45 M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, January 2, 1937, (*Sarvodaya*, op. cit., p. 51).

46 These nationalized industries, it is valid to hold, would be managed on a decentralized pattern in the Gandhian scheme.

47 *Harijan*, July 13, 1947.

economics is always on individual purification. He wrote : "I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor. That is what I have been trying to do for the last fifty years or more, and so I claim to be a foremost Communist."<sup>48</sup>

Gandhi said that truth and *Ahimsa* must incarnate in socialism. He was of the view that non-violence generates socialism because if a man wanted to be actively non-violent he could not remain confined to self-introspection or meditation in a cloistered retreat. He had to rise against social injustices of all kinds and at all places. Active non-violence, hence, means the dynamization of the stubborn power of moral resistance to evil, injustice and exploitation. Explaining the background of the view that a non-violent person must rise against social injustice, Gandhi stated : "I have claimed that I was a socialist long before those I know in India had avowed this creed. But my socialism was natural to me and not adopted from any books." Satyagraha was the only means to bring about ethical socialism.<sup>49</sup> Gandhi was firmly of the conviction that Satyagraha could rid society of all political, moral and economic evils. He said that the socialism of Godless people led nowhere. He stated that western socialism was born in an atmosphere of rampant violence. He did acknowledge, nonetheless, that both the western and eastern conceptions of socialism were attached to "the greatest welfare of the whole society and the abolition of the hideous inequalities... I believe this can be achieved...only when non-violence is accepted."

Gandhi claimed to have read the first volume of Marx's *Capital* when he was interred in the Aga Khan Palace in Poona (1942-1944). But while the modern Marxist socialism is based on the theory of historical materialism which regards the entire recorded history of mankind to be the history of class struggle, Gandhi believed in the violent expropriation of none and was opposed to the sociologists who advocate class struggles. Gandhi ever remained unreconciled to the concept of class struggle. His entire thinking was conceived in the framework of class collaboration and social co-operation. Hence he could never be made to accept that the hitherto suppressed sections should attempt the 'expropriation' of the dominant class. The Gandhian theory of non-violence could not compromise with the revolutionary implications of class struggle. For bringing about reforms in the non-violent way, Gandhi referred to "education both of the haves and the have-nots." He had faith in education as the spearhead of a silent social revolution. He further wrote : "An atmosphere of mutual respect and trust has to be established as a preliminary step. There can be no violent conflict between the classes and the masses."<sup>50</sup> But his concept of class collaboration does not mean perpetuation of the exploitative *status quo*. It has to be understood in the framework of his

48 *Harijan*, March 31, 1946.

49 "Socialism and Satyagraha", *Harijan*, July 20, 1947.

50 *Harijan*, April 20, 1940.

constantly reported advocacy of Satyagraha to remedy all types of social, political and economic evils. He said that the western theory of socialism was born in an atmosphere full of violence. Instead of revolutionary violence and capture of the power of the state, he advocated a direct action of love and non-violence. In place of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Gandhi stood for the rehabilitation of rural economy and preached the eventual neutralization of political power for all classes. He never accepted the dogmatics of Marxian socialism—dialectical materialism and the three laws of the transformation of quantity into quality, the interpenetration of opposites and the negation of the negation, and the economic theory of surplus value. Thus there are enormous and fundamental theoretical differences between Marxism and Gandhism and it is far from the truth to say that Marxism minus violence is equal to Gandhism.

### 9. Critique of Communism

Gandhi was hostile to the technics of communism<sup>51</sup> although he did not enter into any elaborate analysis of the economics and sociology of communism. But he was thoroughly repelled by the association of communism with atheism and violence. As early as March 30, 1919, Gandhi had said in a speech in Madras :

“Bolshevism is the necessary result of modern materialistic civilization. Its insensate worship of matter has given rise to a school which has been brought up to look upon materialistic advancement as the goal and which has lost all touch with the final things in life.”<sup>52</sup>

In this speech Gandhi pointed out that while self-restraint was the Satyagraha creed, Bolshevism stood for self-indulgence. Gandhi warned that if the quest of spirit and love yielded to matter and brute force “we shall have Bolshevism rampant in this land which was once so holy.” In an article entitled “My Path” in the *Young India*,<sup>53</sup> Gandhi wrote :

“I am yet ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is. I have not been able to study it. I do not know whether it is for the good of Russia in the long run. But I do know that in so far as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me. I do not believe in short—violent—cuts to success. Those Bolshevik friends who are bestowing their attention on me should realize that, however, much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motive, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes.”<sup>54</sup>

51 Gandhi was hurt to find the growth of imperialism in Russia.—(Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, VII, p. 210).

52 M. K. Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings*, pp. 382-83.

53 December 11, 1924.

54 *Non-Violence*, Vol. I, p. 38.

He never appreciated the technics and ideas of the Indian communists although he had more intimate contacts with the Indian socialists. The communists inside India and outside often accused him of being a spokesman of the bourgeoisie and hence a hindrance to the impending mass revolution. But this accusation, as pointed out earlier, is thoroughly unfair. Gandhi was a national leader of all sections of the people and not simply of the bourgeoisie or the "proletariat".

There are some thinkers of the school of historical materialism like Marx, Engels, Lenin, Buvharin, Luxemburg and others who prescribe an economic revolution and a radical social reconstruction. Gandhi, to the contrary, felt that a *meta-economic* solution was needed. Like Ruskin and some of the Christian socialists, Gandhi felt that commercial and economic activity had to be conducted not mainly on the basis of technical rationality and formal efficiency calculated in terms of the reduction of costs and optimum production but on that of moral justice and limitation of wants. He, therefore, advocated a voluntary restriction of acquisition and accumulation in place of the violent expropriation of the expropriators.

#### **10. Bread Labour**

The idea that man should earn his bread by the sweat of his labour, inspired several Christian preachers as also ascetics and members of the medieval monasteries. St. Paul had said : "If any would not work, neither should he eat." St. Augustine regarded labour as a means for the perfection of man. Tolstoy advocated and popularized the ideal of bread labour originally sponsored by T. M. Bondareff.<sup>55</sup> The command of the Genesis, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread", inspired the latter. Tolstoy's conception of "bread labour" was a magnificent description of rural work on the farms. In his book *What Shall We Do Then?*, he preached the law of labour. He denounced the sharp separation of physical and manual labour because he regarded it as a device for perpetuating the slavery of the workers. The ancient Egyptian economy, the economy of the Roman Empire and the feudal Middle Ages, and even the economy of the Church have been based on this separation. In their support, the advocates of the ascendant classes claim that they have been assigned the job of governing and educating others by God. Even at the time of the French Revolution, the clergy claimed to educate the people, the nobility to govern them, and the government servants and the army to protect them. For these services, their means of livelihood were produced by the labourers in the field. Tolstoy regarded this wholesystem as unjustifiable because it results in the enslavement of the working population. The latter are eternally condemned to tyranny and oppression, and others appropriate the fruits of the labour. He condemned

<sup>55</sup> T. M. Bondareff, *Labour*.

Hegelianism, Malthusianism and Comteanism as apologies for this unnatural system. Hegel with his notion of the real and the rational appeared, to Tolstoy, as the justifier of the oppressive *status quo*. Malthus with his notion of disproportion between the law of arithmetical progression with which resources increase and the law of geometrical progression with which population increases, seemed to put the blame for poverty on an uncontrollable law of nature. Tolstoy, on the other hand, felt that poverty could be controlled by the practice of the Biblical law of sharing one's two coats with one's poor neighbour. Comtean positivism with its theory of society as an organism was basically a false philosophy because unlike a person, the society lacks a common sensorium. Furthermore, it appeared as a support to the modern system of division of labour with its attendant evils of inequality and gross oppression. Tolstoy regarded it as ridiculous that Comte's support of the *status quo* appealed to the educated sections while his moral principles were ignored. He, on the other hand, categorically stated that we have no right to exploit the labour of others. Everyone must work for producing his means of livelihood. Only thus can the immoral system wherein millions perform killing labour to support the luxurious living of a chosen few be ended. The division of labour which is one of the prime concepts of modern political economy was regarded by Tolstoy as a clever and wicked device to prevent the working of the divine law that everyone must produce his own food. Bread labour is the sole antidote to rampant exploitation. He quoted the saying of a Chinese prophet : "If there is one idle person in the world then some one must be dying of hunger." That every person should do manual labour, Tolstoy regarded as a universal law. Only this law, if followed, could eliminate the differences between the social classes. Furthermore, Tolstoy pointed out that intellectuals could get enthusiasm even for their scholarly work if they engaged in physical labour. Peter Kropotkin, the Russian anarchist also propounded that all citizens including teachers, journalists and professionals between the ages twenty and forty-five should perform manual labour for four to five hours daily.<sup>56</sup>

Gandhi not only preached but also practised this concept of bread labour in his South African days. The Phoenix Farm as stated earlier, was originally based on the practice of this principle. He was sincere in his conviction that the theory of bread labour if adequately practised would go a long way in creating the moral and social atmosphere for the realization of full equality. He wrote :

"Everyone should deem it a dishonour to eat a single meal without honest labour. If we could shed the aversion to labour and adapt ourselves to unexpected changes of fortune, we would go a long way towards the acquisition of fearless-

56 C. Gide & C. Rist, *A History of Economic Doctrines*, (London, G. G. Harrap, 1943), p. 636.

ness and thus towards an upliftment of our national character.”<sup>57</sup>

Bread labour will strike at the roots of that unjust distinction between mental labour and manual labour which has been made the basis of the psychological defence of slavery by Aristotle. The social equalitarianism of Gandhi, as differentiated from Aristotle's defence of inequality, stems from the former's ethical approach. Life is to be consecrated as a sacrifice, according to the Gita. Everybody must work. Those who eat without working are parasites. Thus the economic foundations of Gandhian political philosophy are inspired by a moral orientation. Gandhi claimed that his experience has convinced him that “non-violence cannot be sustained unless it is linked to conscious body labour and finds expression in our daily contact with our neighbours.” In 1925 he had said that body labour in some form or other would be the criterion for franchise in the free India of his dreams. He felt that the “labour test” would be far superior to the literacy or property tests. He reiterated this belief of his, also in 1947, on the eve of Independence.

Gandhi found kinship in the Biblical idea that man must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, and the concept of bread labour. But he was not rigorously demanding that every person must earn his bread by his own labour. He stressed only that every one must perform some useful body labour and thus be entitled to his daily bread.

One of the greatest drawbacks in the traditional Indian social and political philosophy has been the enunciation of a very wide gulf between intellectual labour and manual labour. The people who do important social jobs through their hand have been looked down upon. The people who clean latrines and who do other “dirty” jobs essential for the maintenance of society have been condemned both in theory and practice. The law-givers like Manu and Yajnavalkya and the poets like Valmiki and Bhavabhuti have justified the low social status of the manual workers. The Sanskrit legal literature is based on a complete negation of the rule of law. It grades its scheme of punishment according to the caste status of the culprit. This is a very deplorable situation. The distinction between intellectual and manual labour which has been idealised by the old Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle has been challenged by several modern socialist and communist writers and propagandists. Gandhi also stood for the elimination, if not the complete annihilation, of the differential social stratification based on the performance of different kinds of labour. The Gandhian theory of bread labour is calculated to bring about a more organic spirit of equality. If every person has to do some kind of physical labour for earning his bread, then the feelings of superiority or subordination associated with some kinds of jobs will

57 *Harijan*, January 19, 1947.

automatically vanish. Bread labour will also result in the practice of simplicity which is the basis of moral life in the Gandhian philosophy.

Gandhi had a deep emotional regard for labour as an economic category and a vital source of wealth. The real wealth of the nation consists, according to him, in labour. He wrote :

“Coins are but a measure of labour performed. They have no other value. If I buy a rupee worth of flour, I have paid for the labour of cultivation, carrying and grinding. Therefore the real owner of wealth is one who puts in a certain amount of labour with a conscious productive aim.”<sup>58</sup>

Although Gandhi would not accept the strict assumptions of the, labour theory of value either in its Ricardian or in its Marxian forms still he adhered to the moral idea of the sanctification of labour. For example, in the concept of *Yajna* formulated in the *Bhagavadgita*, Gandhi read the notion of altruistically-inspired activities and on that basis he supported plying of the Charkha. He said : “Labour has its unique place in a cultured human family.”<sup>59</sup>

### **11. Concept of Equal Distribution : Economic Equality**

Ruskin proposed the distribution of remuneration according to the eternal principles of justice instead of the mechanical doctrine of demand and supply. This implied that “all labour ought to be paid by an invariable standard.”<sup>60</sup> Gandhi extends Ruskin’s conception of the equality of wages to all kinds of labour and pleads for equal distribution. According to the Gandhian theory, in the ideal society there should be equality of wages not only for labourers but also for the other members of the different professions. All persons should be supplied with the necessaries to satisfy their natural needs. Thus Gandhi inculcated the revolutionary doctrine of equality of wages for the lawyer, the doctor, the teacher and the scavenger as the panacea for socio-economic evils.

The doctrine of equal distribution implies at the immediate level that each man should have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs. There should be no accumulation and no useless possession. The constituent elements of economic equality were—a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, medical relief and facilities for the education of children, for every family. By economic equality Gandhi does certainly not mean the doctrine of absolute equalization of the possessions of individuals. This form of equalization is neither possible nor desirable. It is too arithmetical. But Gandhi would not have favoured the Aristotelian conception of proportionate equality either. According to Aristotle, equality should be dispensed according to one’s qualities and attainments. When Gandhi pleads that the lawyer

58 *Harijan*, March 25, 1939.

59 *Harijan*, July 28, 1946.

60 John Ruskin, *Unto This Last, op. cit.*, p. 123.

and the scavenger should receive equal payments, he is repudiating the Aristotelian conception.

For the concrete realization of economic equality it was essential to take recourse to the Charkha and the allied industries. This would go a long way to bring about social and economic equality. For the realization of economic equality he would not wait for state action. Gandhi pleaded for concrete immediate personal action. He wrote :

"Under my plan the State will be there to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate to them or force them to do its will. I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. I will not wait till I have converted the whole society to my view but will straightway make a beginning with myself. It goes without saying that I cannot hope to bring about economic equality of my conception, if I am the owner of fifty motor cars or even of ten bighas of land. For that I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor."<sup>61</sup>

In the first stage of communism, that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat, Marx prescribed the formula of payment according to work, while for the second stage of communism he accepted the criterion of payment according to needs. Gandhi, in his later years, also subscribed to the final Marxian formula : "to each according to his need."<sup>62</sup> Gandhi does not clarify whether he wanted payment according to needs for the *first stage*, that is *Swaraj* or for the *second stage* of the non-violent state or for the *third stage* or the highest ideal society, that is *Ramraj*. It is possible to hold that he wanted the application of this formula for the second stage or the non-violent state. In *Swaraj*, however, Gandhi would like the elimination of all forms of economic exploitation, through non-coercive technics.<sup>63</sup>

61 *Harijan*, March 31, 1946.

62 *Ibid.*

63 In an article entitled "No and Yes" in the *Young India*, (Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, II, p. 256), Gandhi wrote : "My ideal is equal distribution but, so far as I can see, it is not to be realized. I, therefore, work for equitable distribution. This I seek to attain through Khaddar . . . Hence in that sense Khaddar leads to *Swaraj*." (Our *Italics*).

Part TWO  
**THE POLITICAL THEORY OF GANDHI**

# 10

## THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF NON-VIOLENCE

### I. Tolstoy and Gandhi

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) was not only the author of the epoch-making novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* but was also a leading religious philosopher and teacher. He was intensely catholic in his studies of religion and was receptive to the teachings of Moses, Solomon, Buddha, Confucius and Schopenhauer. Against the pretensions of the Russian Orthodox Church, he stood for the simple and devout teachings of the New Testament. He was hostile to the absolutism and militarism of the Russian state. He was against war. He had witnessed the miseries brought about by the Crimean War and he stood for the complete elimination of violence and patriotism. He advocated the cultivation of the virtues of simplicity, devotion to God and the felicities of a life of manual labour. He condemned all ostentation and exhibitionism and ridiculed the builders and planners of the Eiffel Tower of Paris. In his literary views, he had the boldness to write against the snobberies of Shakespeare and Goethe.

Tolstoy in his *The Kingdom of God is Within You*<sup>1</sup>, took Christ's prescriptions of non-resistance to evil as an absolute indubitable truth. He refers to Chelcicky, the fifteenth century Czech (the author of the book *The Net of Faith*), William Lloyd Garrison, Adin Ballou, Dymond (the author of *On War*, 1824), Deniel Musser (the author of *On Non-resistance*, 1864), George Fox, William Penn, the Moravian Brethren, the Waldenses, the Albigenses, the Bogomiles, the Paulicians, the Mennonites of Germany and the Doukhobors of Russia who also absolutely accepted the principle of non-resistance to evil by violence.

In the early years of his life in South Africa, Gandhi read Tolstoy's book *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. He says that he was "overwhelmed" by this book. It left a permanent impression on his mind and character, and in his *Autobiography*, Gandhi has

1 Published in 1893.

eloquently praised "the independent thinking, profound morality, and the truthfulness of this book."<sup>2</sup> Subsequently Gandhi also read Tolstoy's *The Gospel in Brief* and *What Then Must We Do?*

Gandhi has acknowledged his deep debt to Tolstoy. In a letter written to him (Tolstoy) on October 1, 1909 from London, Gandhi says : "I had the privilege of studying your writings also, which left a deep impression on my mind." While forwarding his own book *The Indian Home Rule* to Tolstoy, in the accompanying letter dated April 4, 1910, from Johannesburg, Gandhi says : "As your devoted follower I send you herewith a brief booklet which I have written." In the course of his letters to Tolstoy written during 1909-1910, Gandhi shows his great anxiety to solicit the former's esteemed co-operation in giving wider publicity to the South African Satyagraha movement and Tolstoy, in his turn, definitely and positively blessed the movement and recognized its significance for mankind, because it was a vindication of the superiority of love over governmental force and organized brutality.

It may be stated here that Tolstoy read Gandhi's *Indian Home Rule* as he also read the biography of Gandhi written by Doke and wrote in a letter to him (Gandhi) dated May 8, 1910 : "...by discovering your biography by Doke, I happen to know you through that biography which gripped me and it gave me a chance to know and understand you better."

It is possible to state that Gandhi learnt from Tolstoy three lessons, because these are the central teachings of the latter's books mentioned by him.

(1) Gandhi's innate belief in the sanctity of the call of conscience might have been strengthened by Tolstoy's view that the divine kingdom is within a man's heart as stated in his *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. In other words, the kingdom of God is not a super-historical or transcendental or eschatological entity, nor is it to be identified with the church, but it is located in the pure heart and conscience of man.

(2) Gandhi's adherence to non-violence might have been deepened by Tolstoy's emphasis on the efficacy of positive love as the eternal law of life.<sup>3</sup> Gandhi, constantly in his later writings, extends the meaning of *Ahimsa*. To him it is not merely the negative attribute of abstention from injury to other living beings but is the positive virtue of love and compassion. This interpretation he might have derived from *The Gospel in Brief*. In an obituary on the death of Tolstoy published in *The Indian Opinion*, Gandhi hailed him as a Maharshi or Fakir and wrote that the essence of the latter's

2 M. K. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, (1927 ed.), Vol. I, p. 322.

3 Gandhi wrote that originally he believed in violence. But the reading of *The Kingdom of God is Within You* cured me of my scepticism and made me a firm believer in *Ahimsa*.—(Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. II, p. 317).

teaching was the belief in the superiority of soul-force which implied the pursuit of compassion even to the enemy.<sup>4</sup>

(3) Gandhi might have been made aware of the exploitationist character of the modern state and the industrial civilization as also of the oppressions perpetrated by the landlords upon peasants by his very close study of the writings of Tolstoy. This awareness he might have received from *What Then Must We Do?*

Gandhi had the spirit of the crusader and the martyr and he took the moral and religious teachings of the scriptures far more seriously than Tolstoy the artist and litterateur ever did. With all my reverence for Tolstoy, I cannot help feeling that the latter's protests against the evils of contemporary Russian government and society were mainly at the intellectual level. Gandhi, on the other hand, manifested more of the divine spirit in action and hence suffered all kinds of privations, imprisonments and miseries for his principles to an extent far greater than Tolstoy ever did.

Furthermore, the gentle Hindu Gandhi had more of the spirit of tolerance and an inclusive appreciation of the teachings of the other religions of the world than Tolstoy, the Christian aristocrat. For example, Gandhi appreciated and practised the teachings of Jesus Christ to an extent far greater than Tolstoy, with regard to the teachings of Krishna.

## 2. Foundations and Theory of Non-Violence

Gandhi's greatness as a leader and thinker lay in his transformation of the individualistic message of non-violence into a successful technic for direct mass action. Mahavira, Buddha, Nagasena, Ashvaghosha and Santideva had conceived of *Ahimsa* as a tenet of personal action and motivation.<sup>5</sup> But Gandhi transformed it also into a social and political technic. He, thus, attempted to apply the theory of *Ahimsa* enunciated by the old Indian teachers and prophets on a social and political plane. The supreme concept, according to him, which is necessary for the reformation of politics is non-violence.

4 *Collected Works*, Vol. X, pp. 369-70.

5 Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*, p. 231, has made a subtle distinction between the ancient Indian concept of *Ahimsa* rooted in the background of world-and-life-negation and Gandhian *Ahimsa*. The former "sets before it no aims that are to be realised in the world, but is simply the most profound effort to attain to the state of keeping completely pure from the world." Since Gandhi accepts the philosophy of world-and-life-affirmation and service, "with him *Ahimsa* engages in activity within the world and in this way it ceases to be what in essence it is." Thus, in Gandhi, *Ahimsa* "is freed from the principle of non-activity in which it originated and becomes a commandment to exercise full activity" (p. 231). But while appreciating the subtleness of Dr. Schweitzer's approach, I would like to state that from the historical and philological standpoints, his basic thesis that the notion of *Ahimsa* had its origin in the animistic desire to keep oneself free from worldly "defilements" is without substantiation.

Violence is a comprehensive category and is manifested both at the personal and the institutional levels. Evil thoughts,<sup>6</sup> sentiments of revenge<sup>7</sup> and brutality, verbal pugnacity, and even accumulation of unnecessary things represent examples of personal violence. Falsehood, trickery, intrigues, chicanery and deceitfulness are also forms of violence, according to the comprehensive connotation given to the term by Gandhi. Physical punishments, imprisonment, capital punishment and wars represent examples of violence committed by government. Economic exploitation and strangulation of others are also manifestations of violence. Even excess of emulation and competition can become species of violence. Non-violence or *Ahimsa* is, hence, necessarily, equally comprehensive and represents the total neutralization of violence in all forms.

*Ahimsa* is not merely the negative act of refraining from doing offence, injury and harm to others but really it represents the ancient law of positive self-sacrifice and constructive suffering. Gandhi interpreted it as signifying utter selflessness and universal love. The ultimate aim of *Ahimsa* is even to love the so-called enemies or opponents. In 1930, Gandhi said that he would suck the poison out of a dying enemy of his if he was a victim of snake-bite. *Ahimsa*, thus, is equivalent to positive compassion and love.<sup>8</sup> It even implies, the cultivation of gladness and felicity involved in suffering for others. *Ahimsa* is implicitly latent in all human beings because all are sharers in the divine spiritual reality and its culmination is the negation of self-subsistent particularity and a realization of the feeling of love and substantive unity with the whole of creation.<sup>9</sup> It is the substitution of arrogance, antagonism and alienation by love. Hence Gandhi wrote in his *Autobiography*, "I must reduce myself to zero. *Ahimsa* is the farthest limit of humility." The supreme vocation of man is the purposive evolution of *Ahimsa* as

6 Gandhi says, in an article, reproduced in the volume entitled *Young India*, Vol. III. p. 883 : "To kill any living being or thing save for his or its own interest is '*himsa*' (violence), however noble the motive may otherwise be. And a man who harbours ill-will towards another is no less guilty of '*himsa*' (violence) because for fear of society or want of opportunity, he is unable to translate his ill-will into action. A reference to both intent and deed is thus necessary in order finally to decide whether a particular act or abstention can be classed as *ahimsa* (non-violence). After all, intent has to be inferred from a bunch of correlated acts."

7 M. K. Gandhi, "God be Praised", *Harijan*, August 17, 1934 : "Hate is the subtlest form of violence."

8 "It gives me ineffable joy to make experiments proving that love is the supreme and only law of life. Much evidence to the contrary cannot shake my faith. Even the mixed non-violence of India has supported it."—(M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 1940).

9 M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, (June 29, 1940), says that for non-violent action it is necessary to have "a heart belief that he whom you fear and regard as a robber, dacoit, or worse, and you are one, and that therefore, it is better that you die at his hands than that he, your ignorant brother, should die at yours." (Our Italics).

universal positive love. *Ahimsa*, as thus conceived by Gandhi, is a power of profound social import. Aristotle had said that friendship is the cohesive bond of communities. Gandhi also pleaded for brotherly ethic and believed that *Ahimsa* has, almost an obligatory and compelling power to bring peace and unity to the world.

He also interpreted human history in terms of the slow evolution of *Ahimsa*. Like some of the western anthropologists he says that "our remote ancestors were cannibals." That was succeeded by the second stage of chase—the life of wandering hunters. The third stage was of agriculture which marked the growth of civilized stable life. Man

"founded villages and towns, and from member of a family he became member of a community and a nation. All these are signs of progressive *ahimsa* and diminishing *himsa*. Had it been otherwise, the human species should have been extinct by now, even as many of the lower species have disappeared."

It may appear surprising to several students of Gandhism to find Gandhi speaking here as an adherent of the school of evolutionary anthropology rather than one deriving his theory of social origins from the *Purusha Sukta* or the Puranas. He regarded the process of human evolution as a vindication of the superiority of *Ahimsa* as love. "It is my firm faith that man is by nature going higher," he wrote.

The social application of *Ahimsa*, according to Gandhi, is postulated upon the acceptance of spiritual metaphysics and the implied necessity of the growth of social charity. He stressed *Ahimsa* because the universe is permeated with a divine spirit and all life is sacred. *Ahimsa* is vitally integrated with Truth or God. All men, according to Gandhi, are children of God.<sup>10</sup> Hence to slight a single human being is really to inflict injury upon the divine spirit in man and thus it amounts to an injury upon the whole world. "The Bible rightly taught that vengeance belonged to God."<sup>11</sup>

The tyrannical group-leaders and governments which are the repositories of violence are to be firmly resisted by the Satyagrahi, if they are proved to be in the wrong. Non-violence is only the replacement of retaliation and is no surrender to wickedness. But resistance does not imply hatred for the adversary. Gandhi holds that it is possible and advisable to resist a perverse system but "to resist and attack its author is tantamount to resisting and attacking

<sup>10</sup> In an article entitled "The Best Field for Ahimsa," in the *Harijan*, July 21, 1940, Gandhi stated: "The alphabet of *Ahimsa* is best learnt in the domestic school, and I can say, from experience that, if we secure success there, we are sure to do so everywhere else. For a non-violent person the whole world is one family. He will thus fear none, nor will others fear him."

<sup>11</sup> *Harijan*, April 27, 1947.

oneself." Hence *Ahimsa* is the attitude of harmlessness even to the wrong-doer. Gandhi goes a step further and says that it implies positive love even to the wrong-doer. But this does not mean rendering any help to the wrong-doer in the prolongation of his wrong.

The practice of *Ahimsa* requires faith in the reality and compassion of God and deep self-introspection. The votary of non-violence has to cultivate the acquisition of freedom from envy, hatred, malice, lust, cupidity and uncharitableness.<sup>12</sup> This leads to the acceptance of an elevated standard of virtues. The code of vows or *Vratas* has to be followed by the non-violent Satyagrahi and has to become the standard for cultivation by others. The acceptance of the norm of non-violence would thus almost amount to a moral transvaluation of values. The law of love, if courageously practised, is bound to lead to the elevation of the accent, quality and character of politics and civilization.

As a Vedantist and a Vaishnava, Gandhi regarded all life as sacred and precious. Hence he had deep faith in the sanctity of the right to life. He would not kill even a snake. He said : "God alone can take life, because He gives it." The believer in *Ahimsa* would regard even the lives of the opponents as worthy of reverence. In an article in the *Harijan* Gandhi wrote : "You are no Satyagrahis if you remain silent or passive spectators while your enemy is being done to death. You must protect him even at the cost of your life."<sup>13</sup> He accepted the supremacy of the right to life merely because man as an individual is the subject of social and political rights but because in his inmost essence man is a soul. Hence, like Tolstoy, Gandhi accepted the immutability and obligatory character of the law of love. For himself, he regarded the law of *Ahimsa* as absolute,<sup>14</sup> although he had acquired it after a long struggle. He considered it an infallible weapon, mightier than the force of arms, and believed in it as a categorical imperative.

Like Rousseau, Gandhi thinks that the growth of the military art and the display of the military livery by the soldiers is a sign of decadence and not of progress. The cult of armament and preparedness is the indirect testimony to the wide prevalence of fear, distrust and suspicion. Hence Gandhi wanted the freedom to preach non-violence as a "substitute" for war. He condemned war as an absolute evil<sup>15</sup> and would not accept even the plea of a defensive war or a just war. He would have absolutely repudiated the notion of

12 "Non-Violence begins and ends by turning the searchlight inward."—M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 1940.

13 *Harijan*, April 7, 1946.

14 "I shall of course die with non-violence on my lips".—M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 1940.

15 In an article entitled "Moral Support" in the *Harijan*, August 18, 1940, Gandhi wrote : "I believe all war to be wholly wrong."

an anticipatory war. He felt that there is always some party which is guilty of initiating a war. It is not correct and adequate to state that war is the mechanism of devil or of uncontrollable forces. He said that behind the hand that hurls the sword, there is always the brain and the mind that prescribes the use of the sword. He wrote : "When two nations are fighting, the duty of a votary of *Ahimsa* is to stop the war." Leo Tolstoy also recognized the clamouring contradiction between the profession of Christianity and the simultaneous acknowledgement of the necessity of armaments for national security. Gandhi taught the absoluteness of peace and had even visualized universal disarmament.<sup>16</sup> His *Ahimsa* provides an ultimate vision of univesal fraternity and he hoped that in world politics there would be the increasing resort to consultation and arbitration in place of armed conflicts.

Although, according to Gandhi, all war is unjust from the standpoint of *Ahimsa*, still the aspirant after freedom would distinguish between the aggressor and the defender and render all moral support to the latter.

Sometimes a contradiction has been felt to exist between Gandhi's non-violence and his participation in some forms in wars. During the time of the Boer War in 1899, he raised a Volunteer Ambulance Corps. In 1906, he raised a stretcher-bearing party of twenty Indians at the time of Zulu Rebellion. In 1914, he raised a Volunteer Ambulance Corps in London consisting chiefly of Indian students residing in London. In 1918, he nearly killed himself by strenuous activity for the recruitment of Indian soldiers for the war on the British side. While Tilak wanted to help the Allies through recruitment only on certain conditions being fulfilled, Gandhi was for unconditional military support. Hence it is asked that if Gandhi was a votary of absolute *Ahimsa* why did he participate in any way in a war. When he was helping recruitment in 1918, was he not aiding in planning the killing of German soldiers ? But Gandhi had defended his action on the ground that so long as he was subject of the British Empire it was his duty to help it in times of crisis. He says in his *Autobiography* :

"When two nations are fighting, the duty of a votary of *ahimsa* is to stop the war. He who is not equal to that duty, he who has no power of resisting war, he who is not qualified to resist war, may take part in war, and yet whole-heartedly try to free himself, his nation and the world from war. I had hoped to improve my status and that of my people through the British Empire. Whilst in England I was enjoying the protection of the British Fleet, and taking shelter as I did under its armed might, I was directly participating in its potential violence. Therefore, if I desired

to retain my connection with the Empire and to live under its banner, one of the three courses was open to me : I could declare open resistance to the war and, in accordance with the law of Satyagraha, boycott the Empire until it changed its military policy ; or I could seek imprisonment by civil disobedience of such of its laws as were fit to be disobeyed ; or I could participate in the war on the side of the Empire and thereby acquire the capacity and fitness for resisting the violence of war. I lacked this capacity and fitness, so I thought there was nothing for it but to serve in the war. I make no distinction, from the point of view of *ahimsa*, between combatants and non-combatants. He who volunteers to serve a band of dacoits, by working as their carrier, or their watchman while they are about their business, or their nurse when they are wounded, is as much guilty of dacoity as the dacoits themselves. In the same way those who confine themselves to attending to the wounded in battle cannot be absolved from the guilt of war.”<sup>17</sup>

But it may also be pointed out that in the course of the Second World War, he categorically refused to adopt a position similar to the one adopted in 1918.

Although opposed to militarism, power politics, violence and imperialistic vandalism, Gandhi was not a believer in peace at any price. He said that he did not want the peace of the stone or the grave. Peace is not to be equated with feebleness, inertia and exhaustion. An individual or a nation can only want peace with honour. Peace does not mean appeasement of the aggressor or acquiescence in his imperialistic adventures. Gandhi's comment on the Munich Pact of 1938, as being a settlement for “peace without honour”, is significant. A genuine peace must be founded on the rectification of the forces that threaten peace. Hence it must accept the conception of justice as the apportionment of due claims and rights and is thoroughly antithetical to the imposition of the will of the aggressor on the weak. Addressing a prayer-meeting at Sodepur on November 1, 1946, Gandhi said that any peace to be substantial must be honourable, never at the cost of honour. He, therefore, pointed out that he could never agree to any settlement which amounted to the humiliation or loss of self-respect for any one.

But, on the other hand, the Gandhian theory of peace did not mean the elimination of the antagonist. Resistance has to be offered to the oppression but for the wrong-doer there is to be no hatred. A comprehensive theory of *Ahimsa* ultimately postulates positive love even for the opponent. Gandhi even pleaded for the cultivation of good feelings towards the opponents because, like Buddha, he felt that enmity or *Vaira* leads to more enmity and thus

17 M. K. Gandhi, “A Spiritual Dilemma”, *Autobiography*, p. 258.

a vicious circle is created because the antagonist ever remains disgruntled and hungers for a chance of revenge. Thus the best way is the "conversion" of the opponents. *Ahimsa*, thus, wants to replace the ferocious character of politics of power by the righteousness of universal moral will.<sup>18</sup> This authority of moral inducement and persuasion for the conversion of the opponents can be built up by adherence to the great vows (*Ekadasa Mahavrata*) which produce the moral fervour and strength necessary for the life of a fighter for the cause of right. Thus the basis of the Gandhian philosophy of politics consists in stressing the persistent, overpowering and resolute power of love as a significant factor which can solve group and national tensions and antagonisms through non-constrained conversion.

Gandhi believed in the thorough practice of the ideal of *Abhaya* or fearlessness along with non-violence. He was always stressing that for practising *Ahimsa* it is essential to shed all fear. The votary of *Ahimsa* only has one fear—of God. As he pursues the Godward journey he realises the eternal *Atman* and feels absolute indifference towards the temporary pleasures of the world. He sheds the attachment for the mortal physical frame. "Violence is needed for the protection of things external; non-violence is needed for the protection of the *Atman*".<sup>19</sup> *Ahimsa* or positive creative love can be practised only on the basis of fearlessness and it may even be said that perfect *Ahimsa* means absolute fearlessness. It is the path of the brave. He pleaded only for the heroic non-violent action of the brave and was never attached to the non-resistence offered by the weak. He wanted the cultivation of courage as a preparation for ethical life, but he wanted this courage to be expressed non-violently and not violently. He insisted on the development of that moral courage and strength which proceed from an indomitable will. He said in Noakhali on November 27, 1946 : "The only real guarantee is to be sought in the personal courage of individuals. Everything else depends on it." The operation of *Ahimsa* is the exercise of soul-force and it is a gospel of strength, according to Gandhi. It proceeds from moral and spiritual strength. It is the strongest force known and it is a force of the subtlest kind, according to Gandhi. It is a demonstration of the resolute strength of the heroic soul which

18 He laid down five simple axioms of non-violence :

- (i) Non-violence implies as complete self-purification as is humanly possible.
- (ii) Man for man, the strength of non-violence is in exact proportion to the ability, not the will, of the non-violent person to inflict violence.
- (iii) Non-violence is without exception superior to violence, i.e., the power at the disposal of a non-violent person is always greater than he would have if he was violent.
- (iv) There is no such thing as defeat in non-violence. The end of violence is surest defeat.
- (v) The ultimate end of non-violence is surest victory—if such a term may be used of non-violence. In reality, where there is no sense of defeat, there is no sense of victory." —(*Harijan*, October 12, 1935).

19 *Harijan*, 1940.

refuses to hurt any body because every living creature is essentially a spirit and fundamentally one with himself. *Ahimsa* is the farthest removed from a false masquerade for one's weakness.

There is a solid concern for the actual and the concrete in Gandhi's saying that the sword is not the sign of strength but the symbol of fear and weakness. Fear generates suspicion and sometimes even arrogance. The accumulation of fear results in the formation of complexes. Sometimes it may produce aggressiveness. A greatly disturbing situation of our times is the growth of perverted and mal-adjusted personalities who are prone to being exploited by demagogues who raise bogeys and scares of different kinds and play upon the fear of the people. Gandhi teaches the psychological efficacy of fearlessness based on spiritual faith as the way to counteract the blighting influences of political coercion, group jealousies and rivalries and individual appetites.

Fearlessness is acquired by perfection of personal character and by deep faith in the existence of God.<sup>20</sup> A believer in the reality and kindness of God cares only for truth, Faith in the creative and beneficent power of the Spirit provides to man a firm determination to fight all factors of injustice even at the cost of the sacrifice of one's life.

Gandhi was a perfect devotee of civility and humility, but he explicitly, unconditionally and categorically stated that if the only alternatives were cowardice and violence, he would choose the latter.<sup>21</sup> He was not tired of repeating that fear or cowardice should have no place in the national dictionary. He wrote :

“The truth is that cowardice itself is violence of a subtle and, therefore, dangerous type, and far more difficult to eradicate than the habit of physical violence. A coward never risks his life. A man who would kill often risks it. A non-violent person's life is always at the disposal of him who would take it. For he knows that the soul within never dies. The encasing body is ever perishing. The more a man gives his life, the more he saves it. Thus non-violence requires more than the courage of the soldier of war. The *Gita* definition of a soldier is one who does not know what it is to run away from danger.”<sup>22</sup>

Non-violence, hence, is to be regarded as the summit of bravery. Gandhi pointed out that he could no more preach non-violence to

20 M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, (1940) : “Becoming fearless can best be learnt from a living faith in God. Though He is invisible, He is one's unsailing protector. He who has this faith is the most fearless of all.”

21 M. K. Gandhi, “Hindu-Muslim Clashes”, *Harijan*, Oct. 21, 1939 ; *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol. I, p. 327 : “Violence is any day preferable to impotence. There is hope for a violent man to become non-violent. There is no such hope for the impotent.”

22 *Young India*, December 18, 1924.

a cowardly man than he could tempt a blind man to enjoy healthy scenes.

Gandhi wanted India to follow the doctrine of non-violence not because she was prostrate due to political subjection. He affirmed that India had an imperishable "soul" which could rise above all weaknesses.<sup>23</sup> But after Independence, nevertheless, Gandhi, a little pessimistically and with some amount of mortification, said that India had adopted only the non-violence of the weak<sup>24</sup> because once the British power was out of the picture, the people engaged in unrestrained and intensely violent slaughter and internecine struggles. He confessed, "I have to hang down my head in shame." Gandhi wrote : "I have already said that the non-violence that was offered during the past thirty years was that of the weak . . . India has no experience of the non-violence of the strong." He stuck, however, to his faith in the moralization and spiritualization of politics and remained thoroughly devoted to the principle that increasing adherence to *Ahimsa* alone would emancipate mankind from all kinds of conflict and evil.

Gandhi preached the gospel of *Ahimsa* both for the East and the West. But in their different situational contexts *Ahimsa* implied somewhat different things for them. For India, *Ahimsa* as a social and political technic meant a pooling together of the energies of the people for the work of national liberation. It implied the elimination of petty local jealousies and group, caste and communal discriminations and persecutions and notions of regional superiority. It also signified the notion of the realization of a national community based on suffering, tolerance, self-abnegation and the neutralizations of fissiparous trends. For the western world, the Gandhian philosophy of *Ahimsa* mainly appeared as a gospel of renunciation of *Machtpolitik*.<sup>25</sup> In 1947, Gandhi wrote that if Europe was to save itself from suicide something along the lines of non-violence

23 In his trial speech (1922), Gandhi stated : "I want India to recognize that she has a soul that cannot perish and that can rise triumphant above every physical weakness and defy the physical combination of a whole world."

24 *Harijan*, June 29, 1947.

25 Gandhi has summarized the implications of and the conditions for the success of this stupendous moral norm of *Ahimsa* in an article in the *Harijan*, (September 5, 1936). They are :

- (i) Non-violence is the law of the human race and is infinitely greater than and superior to brute force.
- (ii) In the last resort it does not avail to those who do not possess a living faith in the God of Love.
- (iii) Non-violence affords the fullest protection to one's self-respect and sense of honour, but not always to possession of land or movable property, though its habitual practice does prove a better bulwark than the possession of armed men to defend them. Non-violence in the very nature of things is of no assistance in the defence of ill-gotten gains and immoral acts.
- (iv) Individuals or nations who would practise non-violence must be prepared to sacrifice (nations to the last man) their all except honour. It is,

(Continued)

had to be adopted.<sup>26</sup> Non-violence applied to international politics signified a spiritual substitute for struggle and war and the consequent repudiation of "blood and iron" and "the mailed fist." It, thus, meant the negation of the cults of power, stratagems, exploitation, enslavement, economic imperialism, and war. But it was to be only a moral substitute for war and not the tame acceptance of *status quo*. In face of the advancements in nuclear energy, Gandhi stood for the resort to techniques of love because he was deeply concerned with the survival of man.

As a spiritual and ethical idealist, he believed in the moralization of public administration to make it patterned, more and more, on the basis of non-violence. He wanted to reform the structure of modern political life. If Swaraj could be achieved by non-violence then, the swaraj polity had to be increasingly based on the principle of *Ahimsa*. Hence he emphasized the application of honesty, integrity and beneficent purpose in public administration.

### **3. Reservations to the Applicability of the Absolute Law of Ahimsa**

Gandhi believed in a spiritual purposive universe and was an ethical absolutist. He regarded the vows of truth and *Ahimsa* to be eternal and unimpeachable. In their conceptual essence, these *Vratas* do not require any compromise or modification. But the world and human society do not yet represent the field for the perfect concretization of *Ahimsa*. In the animal world, the ferocious animals like lions, tigers and leopards feed on the weaker ones. Microscopic observations reveal that the atmosphere is full of germs. They have to be destroyed for the safety of human lives. Even in the processes of his very existence, man is trampling upon various worms. Hence some destruction is immanent in the very process of human life. Furthermore, sometimes dacoits engaging in a mad pursuit of man-slaughter have to be killed. Hence the morally imperfect constitution of the world and human society does necessitate some compromises with the eternal maxim of *Ahimsa*. But here also, man has to pursue the moral path humbly and tenaciously, and increasingly dedicate himself to realisation of *Ahimsa*.

therefore, inconsistent with the possession of other people's countries, i.e., modern imperialism, which is frankly based on force for its defence.

- (v) Non-violence is a power which can be wielded equally by all—children, young men and women or grown-up people, provided they have a living faith in the God of Love and have therefore equal love for all mankind. When non-violence is accepted as the law of life it must pervade the whole being and not be applied to isolated acts.
  - (vi) It is a profound error to suppose that whilst the law is good enough for individuals it is not for masses of mankind."
- 26 Roy Walker in his article, in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *M. Gandhi*, pp. 467-68, considers the resistance offered by the Norwegian people (1940-1945) against the Quisling regime and the German occupying force as "predominantly non-violent and remarkably successful."

Some inevitable occasional compromises are not the opportunities for complaisance but incentives to further rigor in the pursuit of the moral path.

Gandhi was an ethical intuitionist and hence he believed in the sanctity of inner motivations and intentions. It may be possible that in certain situations some actions might be performed which although apparently transcending the law of non-violence may actually be in conformity to its inner requirement. For example, once, he allowed a calf to be killed because it was suffering great pain and there was no hope of its recovery.

Although a great moral idealist Gandhi had also a realistic perception of things. He had an intuitive apperception of the social and political situation in India and knew about the social structure and hence his *Ahimsa* was never a plea for sentimental utopianism. He wrote :

"Thus for food we take life, vegetable and other, and for health we destroy mosquitos and the like by the use of disinfectants etc , and we do not think that we are guilty of irreligion in doing so . . . for the benefit of the species we kill carnivorous beasts . . . Even man-slaughter may be necessary in certain cases. Suppose a man runs amuck and goes furiously about, sword in hand, and killing anyone that comes in his way, and no one dares to capture him alive. Anyone who despatches this lunatic will earn the gratitude of the community and be regarded as a benevolent man."<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, although categorically firm in the pursuit of *Ahimsa* in his personal life, he made certain concessions to the absolutism of *Ahimsa* in applying it on a group scale in political life. He said that even after India had won her independence, there will be the need for fighters to defend the country, but he stressed that India should have the smallest army imaginable.<sup>28</sup>

Gandhi was also ready to recognize the use of police force against those who run counter to or violate the mechanism and apparatus of law.<sup>29</sup> He wrote : "I have conceded that even in a non-violent

27 *Young India*, November 4, 1926.

28 H.T. Majumdar, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 102. Gandhi wrote : "For under Swaraj too, I would not hesitate to advise those who would bear arms to do so and fight for the country." His argument was that he, personally, was a believer in absolute *Ahimsa* but others did not, and it was the duty of these latter to render help to the organized government of the day. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, pp. 389-90, categorically states that the Indian National Congress had accepted non-violence only for the fight for freedom and for national unity. "At no time had it gone beyond that position or applied the principle of defence from external aggression or internal danger." Hence the Congress was keenly interested in the Indianization of the army.

29 George Catlin, *In the Path of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 308.

state a police-force may be necessary. This I admit is a sign of my imperfect *Ahimsa*.<sup>30</sup> But the police would act as the servants and not as the masters of the people. They will rarely resort to arms. The police in a non-violent state will rely on the strength of collaboration and co-operation. He was also willing to permit the use of a police-force on behalf of a future world-government.

He also recommended punishment to wrong-doers in the present state of society. He prescribed that thieves and robbers should be confined. He, however, advocated the use of prisons more as reformatories than as places of punishment. As a spiritual doctor, Gandhi wanted to apply the psychological and moral approach to crimes by treating them as a species of disease, but he did never say that the police should cease taking cognizance of public crimes. Gandhi thus makes these concessions to the absolutism of non-violence. The absolute application of non-violence would not favour the punishment even of thieves, robbers and murderers. But Gandhi was realistic enough to make certain concessions to the structure of our imperfect world for the present.

Although, as a prophet of non-violence, Gandhi did not approve of the military action of the Indian government in Kashmir, in 1947, he admired the resourcefulness of the defenders. He said :

“Though he did not approve of the use of arms by the Union Government for aiding the Kashmiris and though he could not approve of Sheikh Abdullah’s resort to arms, he could not possibly withhold admiration for either for their resourceful and praiseworthy conduct, especially, if both the relieving troops and the Kashmiri defenders died heroically to a man. He knew that if they could do so, they would perhaps change the face of India. But if the defence was purely non-violent in intention and action, he would not use the word ‘perhaps’, for he would be sure of change in the face of India even to the extent of converting to the defender’s view the Union Cabinet, if not even the Pakistan Cabinet.”<sup>31</sup>

These concessions to the absolute law of *Ahimsa* are based on two factors. First, the absoluteness of *Ahimsa* as a gospel and (not merely as a policy) applied only to Gandhi because he was conscientiously and completely devoted to it and went even to the extent of identifying non-violence (Love) with God. For others,<sup>32</sup> and for

<sup>30</sup> *Harijan*, September 1, 1940.

<sup>31</sup> *Harijan*, November 16, 1947. For the difference of opinion between Jawaharlal and Vinoba on Gandhi’s attitude regarding the military action of the Union Government in Kashmir, see K. Sridharani, *War Without Violence*, (Bombay ed.), pp. 52-53.

<sup>32</sup> In a letter written to Vallabhbhai Patel on April 22, 1942, however, Gandhi had advised him “to leave the Congress if it does not accept clearly the policy of non-violent non-cooperation.”—N. D. Parikh, *Life of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol. II, p. 464.

organized institutions he believed that there should be progressive approximation to *Ahimsa*. The Indian National Congress accepted non-violence only as a policy and never as a matter of irrevocable faith.<sup>33</sup> But Gandhi regarded it as an infallible and universally applicable technic. In 1922, he had suspended the Civil Disobedience part of the Non-cooperation Movement because of the Chauri Chaura incident. But, in 1930, at the time of the Salt Satyagraha Movement he made it clear that the movement would not be suspended because of any sporadic violence. Only if violence became a part of the movement itself, then it could be suspended. During 1940-41, the Congress was ready to share in war efforts if the British acceded to India's claims to have a responsible central government,<sup>34</sup> but Gandhi, personally, stuck to his absolute attachment to non-violence.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, Gandhi felt that it was unwise to bargain away the part, if the whole could not be immediately obtained. He believed that Satyagraha was based on the acceptance of the inevitability of compromise. He firmly accepted the truth of the saying of the Gita that even a partial and inadequate adherence to the path of good will protect one from fear. He wrote :

33 Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, pp. 85, 209.

34 In an article entitled "A Cry in the Wilderness", *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol. I, pp. 387-90, Gandhi refers to three fields for the exercise of non-violence :

- (i) *The Internal Political*—Success had been attained in this field "against constituted authority."
- (ii) *Social*—Less success had been attained in this field of settlement of internal differences because it was more difficult and there was no pleasure of jail-going (as in the first field).
- (iii) *External Invasions*—The Congress Working Committee felt that (in 1940) India did not have the strength to exercise *Ahimsa* against the invasion of a foreign foe. Patel was sceptical of *Ahimsa*.

35 Towards the middle part of 1942 even Gandhi, however, relaxed. Those admirers of Gandhi who believe that Gandhi would never make any compromise with or reservation to *Ahimsa* would do well to ponder over what Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India* (Calcutta, Signet Press, 1946), p. 418, says : "His love of freedom for India and all other exploited nations and peoples overcame even his strong adherence to non-violence. He had previously given a grudging and rather reluctant consent to the Congress not adhering to this policy in regard to defence and the State's functions in an emergency, but he had kept himself aloof from this. He realized that his half-hearted attitude in this matter might well come in the way of a settlement with Britain and the United Nations. So he went further and himself sponsored a Congress resolution which declared that the primary function of the Provisional Government of Free India would be to throw all her great resources in the struggle for freedom and against aggression, and to co-operate fully with the United Nations in the defence of India with all the armed as well as other forces at her command. It was no easy matter for him to commit himself in this way, but he swallowed the bitter pill, so overpowering was his desire that some settlement should be arrived at to enable India to resist the aggressor as a free nation." Nehru says, *ibid.*, p. 393, that with Gandhi having agreed that the Congress not apply non-violence in the Second World War, "*the practical statesman took precedence over the uncompromising prophet.*" (Our *Italics*).

"Satyagraha is like radium in its action ; an infinitesimal quantity of it embedded in a malignant growth acts continuously, silently and ceaselessly, till it has transformed the whole mass of diseased tissue into a healthy one. Similarly, even a little of true non-violence acts in a subtle, unseen way and leavens the whole society."

#### 4. Weaknesses in the Theory of Absolute Non-Violence

The quest for *Ahimsa* certainly represents the nobility of human aspirations and endeavours, and is a testimony to the spiritual foundations and heritage of the human being. But still there are some points in the Gandhian theory of *Ahimsa* of which I feel critical. In an article in the *Young India*, Gandhi wrote : "My life is dedicated to the service of India through the religion of non-violence which I believe to be the root of Hinduism."<sup>36</sup> I feel that Gandhi is taking an exaggerated view in his interpretation of Hinduism as the religion rooted in *Ahimsa*. The word *Ahimsa* itself is not mentioned in the four Vedic *Samhitas* and begins to be used only since the *Chhandogyo-panishad*. If the Vedas are literally interpreted, one can find in them sanction even for warfare. There is reference to righteous warfare in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The whole philosophy of the *Gita* is built against the background of war. Only Buddhism, Jainism and Vaishnavism sanction, more or less, absolute *Ahimsa*.<sup>37</sup> Gandhi was more influenced by the Vaishnava than by the Vedic tradition. In the *Rigveda* there is mention of the battle of the Aryas and the Dasyus. There is also reference to the famous "Dashraja Yuddha," fought by Sudas. Furthermore, the Vedas and the Brahmanas refer to the various types of sacrifices, some of which involved animal slaughter. All the great incarnations like Rama and Krishna attained immortality in the Hindu mind because they achieved eminence in the battle-field. The great Hindu gods and goddesses are represented as having instruments of violence in their hands. Hence there are enough historical and literary evidences to substantiate the thesis that violence also had its full place in the Hindu scheme of values. Therefore from the standpoint of the history of Indian religions, I do not consider Gandhi to be accurate in his absolutely pacifistic interpretation of Hinduism. There is undoubtedly a great place for *Ahimsa* in Hinduism. It is a monumental tenet of Hindu ethics but it can never be regarded as the "root" of Hinduism.<sup>38</sup> Hinduism has sanctioned just war (*Dharma Samgrama*). Hence it is

36 *Young India*, August 11, 1920.

37 Jawaharlal Nehru, "Tension", *Discovery of India*, p. 397, agrees that Gandhi's view with regard to the predominance of the principle of non-violence in Indian history is "far-fetched" and is coloured, to some extent, by his early experiences among Gujratis who are a peaceful community of traders influenced by the Jain doctrine of non-violence.

38 In the Trial Speech of 1922, Gandhi said : ". . . the religion of non-violence which I believe to be the root of Hinduism."

more correct to say that in Hinduism there is place both for violence and non-violence.

Sometimes Gandhi used to identify truth and *Ahimsa*. I do think that his emphasis on the cleanness, correctness, and sanctity of means is a great contribution to the practice of world diplomacy, but I do not accept the Gandhian formula that non-violence is the sole means of attaining truth. In the last chapter of his *Autobiography*, Gandhi wrote : "... if every page of these chapters does not proclaim to the reader that the only means for the realization of Truth is *Ahimsa*, I shall deem all my labour in writing these chapters to have been in vain." Truth is an integral and fundamental concept of metaphysics and ethics, and has an inclusive connotation. *Ahimsa*, on the other hand, is only a moral precept and a technic evolved by man and is applicable, appropriate and suitable, only to the human and not the cosmic realm. No body blames the fire or lightning for the violence it may cause. But fire and lightning are also aspects of truths in the sense that they are or have existence (*Sat*). Furthermore, no body talks of the misuse of violence in the infra-human realms. The serpent and the tiger are not condemned for being violent. Thus non-violence has limited applicability. But truth as an all-pervasive, all-inhabiting, real substance cannot exclude any stratum, mode or aspect of reality from its comprehension and sway. It is infinite, all-inclusive and immanent. There must, therefore, be several paths for its realization. Hence, logically speaking, I do not see the validity of the proposition of Gandhi that non-violence is the only means of the realization of truth as God. Truth is too momentous a substance to be grasped and cognized solely by *Ahimsa*, although the moral concept of *Ahimsa* is an important means for the realization of truth. According to the *Prithivi Sukta* of the Atharvaveda, truth is regarded as a factor that upholds the earth. Truth as an entity or being is timeless, spaceless and immense. But the evolution of man is a phenomenon about a million years old. Hence any moral concept, proposition or ideal evolved by man who has appeared so late on the stage of the universe cannot comprehend the immeasurable proportions of timeless truth. Furthermore, the theory of non-violence is based on the acceptance of a spiritual teleology and may not appear realistic to a sceptic or to an agnostic or to a materialist.

Gandhi believed in the absolutism of *Ahimsa* and accepted its wonderful potency. He regarded it as an infallible and universally applicable technic. Certainly non-violence is a great moral norm and maxim, and Gandhi is justified in having stressed the necessity, consequence and import of non-violence for social and political action. But after all, non-violence is, from the group standpoint, only a technic and a means, and I do consider that freedom as a spiritual imperative and political goal is more important than non-violence. Freedom has its essence in dynamic ability, autonomous enterprise and creativism and, idealistically interpreted, it also implies the

realization of wholeness. Freedom thus, as Hegel said, is the essence of the Spirit. Compared to freedom, non-violence may appear, at times, to be of less significance. According to Tilak, freedom was more important than non-violence, while Gandhi swore by the absoluteness of the law of *Ahimsa*. It is true, nonetheless, that in 1942, Gandhi contemplated that some compromise had to be made with non-violence and the primacy of Swaraj for India vindicated. He said in 1942 :

“There is ordered anarchy all around and about us. I am sure that the anarchy that may result, because of the British withdrawal or their refusal to listen to us and our decision to defy their authority, will in no way be worse than the present anarchy. After all, those who are unarmed cannot produce a frightful amount of violence or anarchy, and I have a faith that out of that anarchy may arise pure non-violence. But to be a passive witness of the terrible violence that is going on, of the terrible anarchy that is going on in the name of resisting a possible foreign aggression, is a thing I can't stand. It is a thing that would make me ashamed of my *Ahimsa* . . . I have not asked the British to hand over India to the Congress or to Hindus. Let them entrust India to God, or in modern parlance, to anarchy. Then, all parties will fight one another like dogs, or will, when real responsibility faces them, come to a reasonable agreement. I shall expect non-violence to rise out of that chaos.”

Another possible limitation in Gandhi's theory of non-violence is that it does not adequately probe into the group-aspects of the phenomenon of violence, although it does examine the psychology of individual violence.<sup>39</sup> Gandhi holds the view that the state is organised concentrated violence and says that there is violence in the state because there is the perverse craving for violence in the human heart. But he does not specify the concrete processes of the manifestation of this internal basic drive or “residue”<sup>40</sup> of violence in the external institutional apparatus and structure of the state. The researches of the French sociologists like Durkheim, Tarde and G. LeBon have made us aware of the fact that group behaviour presents a qualitatively

39 In a thought-provoking chapter, “Conversion or Compulsion” in *Autobiography*, Jawaharlal Nehru has attacked the conversion of non-violence into an “inflexible dogma” thus resulting in its loss of “spiritual appeal to the intellect” (p. 547). He rightly points out that non-violence may be made “a cloak for cowardice and inaction” (p. 546). Very correctly he says that even after the assumption of power through non-violent means the organised authority may have to take recourse to violent means if the recalcitrant elements take advantage of non-violence to create disturbances (p. 546). Nehru has grave doubts about renunciation of power by classes and empires in response to the appeals of non-violence (p. 544).

40 “Residue” is a term in Pareto's sociology. It means a basic drive.

different pattern from that of the individual. Those same persons who in private lives may act quite rationally are overpowered by unpredictable emotions and passions when acting in a crowd. Group behaviour may represent the magnification of some aspects of individual emotion and the negation of some other aspects. Hence, in the analysis of collective behaviour and group phenomena, we require adequate data and more careful probe. If institutions are contaminated by violence, it is essential to point out whose violence they represent and in what degree. Do they represent the violence in the hearts of all the members or only of the ascendant group therein ? Gandhi always prescribed individual purification as the effective antidote to all evils. This is quite an important method of solution but it is also essential to examine the group aspects of the phenomena. In the case of communal riots in 1946-47, Gandhi prescribed cleansing of the heart and social fraternization. This was a potent remedy but the deeper aspects of the historical, economic, social and cultural foundations of communal troubles also required attention and analysis. Hence I think that the psychological approach to a problem has to be supplemented with a sociological and political approach. The problem of the exact relation between the individual emotions and passions and the group manifestations of those emotions and passions requires more research than has been put in at present.

### 5. Non-Violence and World Politics

Gandhi also dreamt of the application of *Ahimsa* as a technic for the resolution of tensions and struggles on an international scale.<sup>41</sup> He wanted world politicians and statesmen to use it. Thus, he visualised its application to the rather chaotic structure of world diplomacy.

Although, in practice, the difference between defensive and offensive violence is obliterated, a non-violent person does recognize which side is just. For example, Gandhi wished success to the Abyssinians, Spaniards, Czechs, Chinese and the Poles, though in each case he wished that they could have offered non-violent resistance.

Gandhi wanted the Jews in Palestine to "offer Satyagraha in front of the Arabs and offer themselves to be shot or thrown into the Dead Sea without raising a little finger against them." But this suggestion seems utterly utopian to me.

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41 Roy Walker, in an article in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *M. Gandhi*, (2nd ed.), p. 463, points out that on various occasions, Gandhi advised the application of non-violence to world politics :

- (i) In 1931, while in England, he advised the British unemployed to non-cooperate with the dole system.
- (ii) He advised the German Jews to use non-violent non-cooperation against the Nazis.
- (iii) In 1939, he advised non-violent defence of freedom to Czechoslovakia against Germany.
- (iv) He made similar suggestions to Poland in response to Paderewski's appeal to him.
- (v) In 1940, he made a similar appeal to Britain.

Gandhi advised the German Jews to practise non-violent resistance against the Nazi invaders.<sup>42</sup> He wrote :

"But the Jews of Germany can offer Satyagraha under infinitely better auspices than the Indians of South Africa. The Jews are a compact, homogeneous community in Germany. They are far more gifted than the Indians of South Africa. And they have organized world opinion behind them. I am convinced that if someone with courage and vision can arise among them to lead them in non-violent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling of an eye be turned into the summer of hope. And what has today become a degrading man-hunt can be turned into a calm and determined stand offered by unarmed men and women possessing the strength of suffering given to them by Jehovah. It will be then a truly religious resistance offered against the godless fury of dehumanized man. The German Jews will score a lasting victory over the German gentiles in the sense that they will have converted the latter to an appreciation of human dignity. They will have rendered service to fellow-Germans and proved their title to be the real Germans as against those who are today dragging, however unknowingly, the German name into the mire."<sup>43</sup>

But I do not think that the Jews could have rendered this non-violent resistance. The environmental and psychological foundations of such a course of action were not present in Central and Eastern Europe. Gandhi wrote that the non-resistance of the Jews is born of weakness. Their non-violence has no love in it. He stated that the Jewish race had never been non-violent in his sense because (i) they crucified Jesus, (ii) they believed in the Mosaic law of "tooth for a tooth", and (iii) they had violence in their hearts for the oppressors because they wanted the democratic powers to punish the Germans and Hitler.<sup>44</sup> But I have grave doubts if the unadulterated love

42 Gandhi's utopianism is also revealed in his belief that even a patched-up non-violent army would take the wind out of Hitler's sails. He says : "It (the European situation) fills me with the utmost non-violence.... I cannot think of a better thing to offer to Britain and the defeated nations than non-violence. It is impossible for me to enthuse over the deeds of Hitler or of those who fought or failed to fight him. There is nothing to choose between the victory of Hitler and the defeat of others. But I have no doubt in my mind that even a patched-up non-violent army would take the wind out of Hitler's sails, I need not have his aeroplanes, tanks etc. He need not destroy our homes. Our non-violent army would welcome him and it may be that he would not dare to come. I know that this may be a daydream. But I cannot belie the principle of a lifetime or wipe out my daydreams of the past twenty years. If we have not non-violent strength of the brave to fight anarchy and aggression, let us say and reduce ourselves to a strong minority hoping to develop non-violence of the strong in the days to come."—(M. K. Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol. I, p. 586. (Our Italics).

43 *Harijan*, November 26, 1938.

44 M. K. Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol. I, p. 273.

and the fellow-feeling which Gandhi wanted the Jews to practise could have been of any avail against the mechanically operating savage Nazi troops.

During the March crisis of 1939, on the question of Czechoslovakia, Gandhi recommended simultaneous disarmament on the part of the democratic powers as the solution to the threatening situation of world politics. But I believe that it would have been a very unsafe and hazardous adventure by the allied powers.<sup>45</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi would prescribe complete non-cooperation with the violent aggressors and oppressors. He wrote :

"A non-violent man or society does not anticipate or provide for attacks from without. On the contrary, such a person or society firmly believes that nobody is going to disturb them. If the worst happens, there are two ways open to non-violence. To yield possession but non-cooperate with the aggressor. Thus, supposing that a modern edition of Nero descended upon India, the representatives of the State will let him in but tell him that he will get no assistance from the people. They will prefer death to submission. The second way would be non-violent resistance by the people who have been trained in the non-violent way. They would offer themselves unarmed as fodder for the aggressor's cannon. The underlying belief in either case is that even a Nero is not devoid of a heart. The unexpected spectacle of endless rows upon rows of men and women simply dying rather than surrender to the will of an aggressor must ultimately melt him and his soldiery. Practically speaking, there will be probably no greater loss in men than if forcible resistance was offered ; there will be no expenditure in armaments and fortifications. The non-violent training received by the people will add inconceivably to their moral height. Such men and women will have shown personal bravery of a type far superior to that shown in armed warfare. In each case the bravery consists in dying, not in killing."<sup>46</sup>

But for the successful operation of this non-violent technic there is necessary an amount of moral strength to endure almost incalculable pain and suffering. In the present-day situation, I would advocate gradual approach towards *Ahimsa*. Any unequivocal acceptance of *Ahimsa* may amount to catastrophic capitulation to the aggressors. The moral grandeur of non-violence appeals to me

<sup>45</sup> Gandhi in making these suggestions for the practice of non-violence as a technic for the resolution of international tensions was acting upon his conviction that "violence even for the vindication of justice is almost played out."—(*Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol. I, p. 288).

<sup>46</sup> M. K. Gandhi, "The Future", written in answer to an American questioner and published in the *Harijan*, April 13, 1940.

but the situational context for a complete application of *Ahimsa* is not yet provided. Any weakening on the part of the democratic forces may be the golden opportunity for the tyrants and oppressors.

Gandhi was sure, in 1942, that India could resist Japan non-violently. He wrote :

"If we were a free country, things could be done non-violently to prevent the Japanese from entering the country. As it is, non-violent resistance could commence the moment they effected a landing .... Thus, non-violent resister would refuse any help, even water. For it is not part of their duty to help anyone steal their country. But if a Japanese missed his way, and was dying of thirst, and sought help as a human being, a non-violent resister, who may not regard anyone as his enemy, would give water to the thirsty one. Suppose the Japanese compel resisters to give them water, resisters must die in the act of resistance. It is conceivable that they will exterminate all resisters. The underlying belief in such non-violent resistance is that the aggressor will in time be mentally and even physically tired of killing non-violent resisters."

But I have grave doubts whether this Gandhian formula against the Japanese would have been practical.

Some of the other suggestions of Gandhi for the use of *Ahimsa* as a technic for the resolution of international tensions also appear unrealistic and unconvincing to me. He said that in this atomic age there was no weapon like non-violent resistance. He believed that the prayer of the non-violent heart could reach the pilot ready to hurl the atom bomb. I feel that merely this prayer of the devoted heart cannot be the efficacious technic to deal with the serious problems of nuclear armament.

## 6. Merits of Ahimsa as a Social and Political Technic

It is an imperfect world and hence several reservations, as pointed out earlier, have to be made to the complete application of *Ahimsa*. I do not deny that it is a great ideal, however. In spite of shortcomings,<sup>47</sup> non-violence can, to a major extent, serve as the ideal means for democratic patterns of behaviour. It is certainly true that it offers a great counterpoise to bloodshed, ravages and colossal destruction which are the consequences of large-scale military operations. War results in a slackening of morals. Hence both in internal and international diplomacy, genuine and co-operative efforts

<sup>47</sup> Some faithful devotees of the Mahatma say that the shortcomings are not of non-violence as a norm but of man. True it is that man has shortcomings. But it is unrealistic to place absolutely utopian ideals before man. The ideals have to be so conceived that there are even some remote chances of their realization.

have to be made for the concretization of *Ahimsa*, to the maximum extent possible, if a world federation of democratic states is the desired objective. The lessening and possible elimination of pugnacity, brutality and warfare should be the criterion of the evolutionary progression of mankind. Machiavelli says that only those prophets succeed in history who have at the back of them political power. Moses, Cyrus, Theseus and Romulus succeeded because they had force, while Fra Girolamo Savonarola was executed as a heretic because he had no support.<sup>48</sup> John Stuart Mill also refers to several instances in the history of mankind when the use of thwarting and neutralizing forces has resulted in the suppression of truth. He says that the dictum that truth always triumphs over falsehoods is a pleasant commonplace refuted by experience. He refers to the failure of Arnold of Brescia, Fra Dolcino, Savonarola, the Albigeois, the Vaudois, the Lollards, the Hussites etc. He also says that early Christianity could succeed only because the persecutions were occasional. He, therefore, does not accept that truth has an automatic power of successful assertion.<sup>49</sup> It is difficult to deny the historical veracity and insight in the statements of Machiavelli and Mill. But as a believer in the superiority of the power of truth, Gandhi would urge along with the Upanishads that truth, being the sole reality, has eventually a conquering power. The survival and continuity of the world and of the various species amidst cruelty, war and destruction is a proof, according to Gandhi, of the superiority of the law of love over the law of force. Survival eventually triumphs over extinction. Suffering triumphs over brutality. The potency of *Ahimsa* is, further, revealed by the millions and millions of cases and instances in human domestic and group life where tensions and conflicts are solved by love. Gandhi wants that this law of love should not remain confined to individual conduct alone. It should invade by its concentrated dynamic the political realms also. Hence he wants that concrete and immediate steps have to be taken to reform the individual, and that kind of individual change of heart will have social and political repercussions. Gandhi's acceptance of divine determinism imparted to him great faith in the inevitable emergence of the non-violent society in the future because God could not be expected to be a witness to the holocaust of man. This notion of the inevitability of the victory of non-violence is a consequence of Gandhi's faith in the conquering power of the divine spirit. Man becomes dejected because he takes a limited view. It is his imperative duty to work for personal self-purification, for the reformation of social and political life and for the realization of God in the lives of living beings, and the eventual triumph of truth is sure to occur because as Gandhi used to repeat, "Truth is God".

48 N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chap. V, "Of New Dominions which have been acquired by one's own Arms and Ability."

49 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Chap. II.

Viewed in the context of this supreme belief in the victory of truth, Gandhi's theory of the progressive application of non-violence to world politics certainly represents a great advance in the direction of political idealism. He persisted in his faith that the various problems of India could be solved by non-violence, and hence his constant refrain was that for the achievement of real freedom and true democracy the torchlight of non-violence has to keep burning with ever greater brightness "in the midst of the present impenetrable gloom."<sup>50</sup> Non-violence, thus enunciated and cherished by Gandhi, will definitely strengthen the moral and psychological foundations of democratic civilization.

As a technic for the solution of social and political conflicts, Gandhi felt that *Ahimsa* was efficacious because the sufferers for the cause of truth raise themselves in the opinion and judgment of the world because through the pains, sufferings and persecutions undergone by them, they deeply touch and influence the delicate sensitivity, mental susceptibility and inner responsiveness of other men and thus prevent the barbarization of society. Furthermore, the settlement of social, political and economic tensions, rivalries and animosities through the technic of non-violence prevents the possible malicious injury to the compromise formula by any group of counter-revolutionists. An attempt is made to convert the latter into integral supporters of the claims of the community. Thus *Ahimsa* is beneficial as a technic for the resolution of national and international tensions.

Even if the immediate implementation of the creed of absolute *Ahimsa* may sound psychologically and sociologically unrealistic, still it can serve as a useful conceptual pattern, a measuring-rod for our concrete courses of action and a fundamental moral *telos* keeping which in mind we may direct our purposive social formation and growth. Unlike Hegel, Gandhi thinks that our institutions are far from being the actualizations of rationality, and hence he prescribes constant efforts for their perfection. Our experience with crime and punishment makes it clear that the concept of punishment as retaliatory and vindictive is giving place to the idea of punishment at least as deterrent if not as purely reformatory. This, in itself, is also at least a partial recognition of the power of non-violence in penal and political life. Kropotkin has referred to the role of mutual aid in history. Sorokin recognizes the significance of dominant altruism for the integration and transformation of man and society. Krabbe said that the growth of community and civilization was gradually leading to the replacement of the sovereignty of the state conceived in terms of political power by the sovereignty of law based on the "feeling of right". The increasing importance of public opinion and the consent of the governed in modern political

philosophy is, in itself, also a recognition of the replacement of force by law and will. These developments in western social sciences and practice only serve to stress that *Ahimsa*, if adhered to as a moral value, is neither unrealistic nor speculative, although absolute and perfect *Ahimsa* in the present chaotic state of world politics is certainly a sentimental piece of wishful thinking. Even Gandhi acknowledged that so long as there was life, absolute *Ahimsa* could not be practiced. Nevertheless, the conceptual pattern has to be retained and human conduct determined according to that light.

Gandhi gave to an aching world the gospel of change of heart or conversion. Too long *Machtpolitik* or the politics of power, constraint or *Danda* has dominated this earth. Power over individuals, over groups and over weaker neighbours has been regarded as the essence of politics. But power politics is ultimately only another name for violence. Hence I agree with Gandhi in holding that there should be the spiritualization and moralization of the bases of politics as a counterpoise to power politics. Violence has to be replaced by the ascendancy of will and right. Unmoralised rapacious political power, if pursued in a relentless spirit, results in eventual frustration and despair. Furthermore, it leads to dissensions, animosities and corruptions. The collapse of the Assyrian Persian, Hohenstaufen and German imperialisms is a tragic epitaph on the nefarious and savage management and display of the politics of force. *Machtpolitik* is based on fraud, malice and brutishness. Gandhi, to the contrary, pleads for tolerance, love and kindness. He wants to moralize political action. Moralization of politics means that there should be a quest for justice, creative freedom, right, rational good and universal welfare. Not the audacious and unwarranted conquest of a weak neighbour but the integration of personality through the harmonization of one's impulses and the maximum satisfaction of the justifiable social demands of citizens should become the aim of individual thought and action and of political rulers. Political action has to satisfy not merely the criteria of formal rationality like the minimization of the costs and the attainment of external efficiency but has also to realize the essential ideals of liberty, equality, charity, justice and universal good or Sarvodaya. Hence social accommodation, solidarity and fraternity on an increasing scale are necessary. Avarice, anger and treachery which are the accompaniments of *Machtpolitik* have to be conquered. But this realization of fundamental ideals has to be made possible by personal purification and by the gradual replacement of the coercive appliances and instruments of the state machine by a regime of moral authority and social justice. Gandhi believed in self-control and he rebelled against the automatic violence of governments because according to the ideal of non-violence, coercive control has to be replaced by voluntary self-discipline. *Ahimsa* requires a quest for the incorporation of justice and virtue in our social and political life and hence it demands the

neutralization of *Machtpolitik*, Gandhi's stress on the ethicization of politics through the pursuit of *Ahimsa*, thus, is an important contribution to political thought.

To sum up, there are four merits of *Ahimsa* as a technic for political action and as a concept in political philosophy. First, it strengthens the foundations of democratic behaviour. Secondly, it prevents the emergence of counter-revolution. Thirdly, it serves as a morally-oriented conceptual pattern for judging political action. Fourthly, it pleads for the negation of *Machtpolitik*.

## 7. Ahimsa and Western Sociological and Political Thought

The stress on *Ahimsa* represents the emphasis on the creative role of the moral mind and heart as factors in human evolution. It implies that evolution is not automatic, dictated by the progress of objective forces, but is influenced by the rational and moral powers of man. In sociological terms, *Ahimsa* represents social co-ordination, mutual adjustment and socio-mental correlation and integration. Consequently, in place of tension, conflict and antagonism it stands for accommodation and co-operation. It wants increasing co-ordination and mutual relationship between the different groups, classes, races and nations into which humanity is apparently divided. It pleads for the replacement of imperialism by the dynamics of creative love.<sup>51</sup> Hence the triumph of *Ahimsa* would necessarily signify the victory over brutality, mutual rapacity and pugnacity. *Ahimsa* is removed from passive acquiescence in or conservative adulation of the *status quo*, because it does imply the dynamization of love for the extirpation of social evils. The Gandhian notion of the progressive realization of *Ahimsa* in social and political life gets confirmation from the theories of the Russian sociologist, Jacques Novicow, who believes in the replacement of the physiological, economic and political struggles of man by a form of bloodless intellectual competition. Auguste Comte the French sociologist and champion of positivism also hoped for the supremacy of beneficence and universal consensus in human affairs.

Gandhi was sure that eventually the force of violence would be replaced by the overpowering authority of justice, truth and peace. To this extent his view is analogous to the views of Kant, Spencer, Cobden and Bright who generally believed that the progress of reason, individuality and right will lead to the nullification of power politics and the realization of the ethical state based on peace. But the failure of the hopes of the eighteenth and nineteenth century optimists of liberal humanism, peace, progress and cosmopolitanism makes us sceptical of those plans and formulas which want the battle of peace to be won in the hearts of human individuals. The

<sup>51</sup> R. Rolland, *M. Gandhi*, p. 16, points out that Gandhi's *Ahimsa* went farther than that of the early Christians because they did not go "so far as to help their persecutors in danger as Gandhi did."

human heart is not an isolated factor in the world but is one variable in a complex web of several mutually related factors. The role of objective social, economic and political forces is immense. Hence I think that the battle of peace has to be fought not only in the individual human soul but deliberate attempts have also to be made to transform that defiled and polluted political structure which exploits the human heart by means of domination, constraint and propaganda. The ending of poverty and imperialism is imperative. The change of human heart has to proceed simultaneously with the change of the social and political structure.

The Gandhian *Ahimsa* is a morally more demanding concept than the "General Will" as propounded by Rousseau, because the latter only accepts the voluntaristic conception of will for the public good while Gandhi prescribes a conscious moral training for the growth of the power of universal love.<sup>52</sup> The Rousseauic general will requires for its triumph the mutual cancellation of the 'pluses and minuses' of selfish wills and the adequate provision to the assembled populace of the necessary relevant information regarding public issues. But the vindication of *Ahimsa* depends on long years of dedicated adherence to the great moral vows like truth, celibacy and God-fearingness. *Ahimsa* as taught by Gandhi is also a higher concept than the "Real Will" of Bosanquet. Bosanquet identified the real will of the individual, the general will of the society and the political will of the state. Even at its highest levels, this real will is only the will to accept voluntarily the social norms, canons and conventions and the accumulated cultural heritage of the national community, while the Gandhian *Ahimsa* as a political force pleads for universal fraternization. While Bosanquet regarded the nation-state as the guardian of moral values,<sup>53</sup> Gandhi believed in ethical universalism and cosmopolitanism.

Furthermore, *Ahimsa* is a more spiritual conception than the notion of socialization, responsiveness, accommodation etc., popularized by the western sociologists, because it is more sincere in its belief in the power of spiritual *Sadhana* and suffering. Being a believer in the evolutionary revolution brought about by the "matchless weapon" of *Ahimsa*, Gandhi prescribes the energisation of the faculty of positive suffering as a technic of social change. Conflicts and animosities are solved in his theory not by superior acceleration of force, but by a deliberate, conscious act of self-abnegation.

52 Both Gandhi and Rousseau were opposed to militarism. In the *Social Contract*, Book III, Chap. 15, Rousseau says: "By reason of indolence and money they end by having soldiers to enslave their country and representatives to sell it."

53 It may be noted, however, that in the Preface to the third edition of *A Philosophical Theory of States*, Bosanquet recognized the significance of the League of Nations.

For the realization of the non-violent society which will be a thoroughly transformed society having transcended power-politics, there is no necessity, according to Gandhi, for a biological transmutation. Gandhi would have reacted with horror to the suggestions of the geneticists. Gandhi's new man is not a biologically new type, but is the embodiment of the moral truths of love and purity. He is to be a perfect Satyagrahi and *Sthitapragna*. In place of the improvement of the human species through genetic solutions, Gandhi adopts the constructive moral approach. His approach is more in the Christian tradition.

There were some liberal thinkers in the west who prescribed a political and institutional solution of the malady of the world. They pointed out that if an adequate institutional set-up, for example, a world parliament or a world system of republics could be built up, humanity will have an era of freedom and progress. But Gandhi was not happy with a mere institutional formula. He felt that humanity was passing through the crisis of a whole civilization, and it could be cured only by a restoration of the moral vows of truth and non-violence. Gandhi would have emphatically declared that behind the political crisis lay the crisis of moral values. He taught the absolutism of *Ahimsa* which has, as its political goal, the cultivation and realization of the unity of mankind and which implies the activization of the sentiments of mutual loving considerations, harmony, peace, moral autonomy and non-constrained trend towards accommodation. He believed in the moral purification of man to be achieved through self-suffering non-covetousness and a spirit of loyalty to truth. Gandhi, thus, advocated a *meta-political* approach to the solution of the maladies of modern civilization.

# 11

## NON-VIOLENCE AND DEMOCRACY

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### 1. Introduction

For millions of years there has been life on this planet without there being any determination of animal conduct by the moral distinctions between right and wrong, violence and non-violence. In the very primitive epochs of human evolution also there is no basis at all to hold the view that the Neanderthal man, the Cro-magnon man and the Grimaldi man were influenced by moral considerations. In the early stages of the evolution of man, violence was an important factor. In the early stages of human civilization in Egypt, Sumer and the Indus Valley, we find no evidence of ethical judgments sanctifying non-violence as a guiding canon. It is only with the rise of the monistic philosophy of the Upanishads and the ethical teachings of Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity that non-violence has been accepted as a dominant criterion of human conduct. The schools of the Sophists, Marx, social Darwinism and the supporters of imperialism advocate the triumph of struggle, force, survival and domination. On the other hand, some other sociologists and political philosophers have emphasised the importance of sympathy, co-operation, fellow-feeling, reciprocal aid, friendship, sense of community and sense of right. So far as human history is concerned, it is, no doubt, true that force and violence have played a determinant role. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the sentiments of justice, fellow-feeling, co-operation and mutual aid have also been important factors in human governance. In many religious scriptures and ethical teachings, the concepts of non-violence and active love have been praised, and it is also significant that in several schools of thinking, the gradual replacement of coercion by persuasion and the substitution of the arbitrament of force by pacific technics of settlement of disputes is being considered the goal in the evolution of humanity.

Violence represents the submergence of reason. It postulates that sheer might has the potency of survival but it cannot always be stated to be so. Many gigantic animals of the mesozoic reptile order have become extinct. It is true that might, force, coercion and domination have been important in history, but a careful study will

point out that it is not pure unadulterated might, but might backed with reason that has been the prevalent factor.

Democracy claims to base itself on reason. The elementary meaning of democracy is that it is a political form of governance wherein the majority either rule directly or choose their representatives for a stated number of years. The purely political conception of direct democracy was formulated by Plato and Aristotle. The classical exponents of democracy in the eighteenth century also sponsored a political criterion. But with the rise of the various schools of socialism and co-operative movement, the view has become popular that mere political representation is not adequate. The plea has, hence, been made, and made effectively, that political democracy should be supplemented with democracy in the working of trade unions and the universities and other educational institutions as well as with adequate economic guarantees for security and the total neutralisation of feelings of superiority and subordination based on the unjustified criteria of stratification and evaluation. Thus, it has been rightly maintained that political democracy should be reinforced with social, economic, industrial and educational democracy. Mahatma Gandhi always stated that political Swarajya must be completed with real economic betterment of the vast millions of the Indian rural countryside.

Sometimes it has also been asserted that democracy at the external and the institutional levels cannot be adequate unless it is practised as a philosophy of life and as a moral outlook towards the problems of the day. This moral and philosophical conception of democracy receives further strength from the Gandhian theory of non-violence. Gandhi always looked to the internal and substantive aspects of thing. He was concerned with the inner motivating forces which, according to him, must be pure. There is enough sanction in Gandhian writings for the view that Gandhi would be satisfied with the triumph of moral will and common good rather than with the counting of heads and numbers.

## **2. Gandhi's Theory of Democracy and Non-Violence**

The western theorists of democracy like de Tocqueville, Dicey and Bryce have been concerned with its organisational and juridical aspects. Gandhi, on the other hand, emphasised three basic factors in the democratic theory which have not received the attention that they should do. The mathematics of western democracy has been satisfied with the triumph of the fifty-one per cent. But Gandhi was extremely solicitous for the rights of the minority. Sometimes he would go to the extent of maintaining that the minority might be right and the majority wrong. But he did not go into the details of the proceduralization and institutionalization of the determination of what is right and what is wrong in a situation where a large body of men is debating a policy-issue. Pressed, he would have said that there should be resort to the criteria of truth and non-violence for

the judgment of right and wrong rather than a mathematical apportionment on the basis of numbers.

Another significant factor in the Gandhian theory of democracy is the emphasis on decentralization. It is true that theorists of local government in England and America have emphasised local autonomy, home rule, financial devolution and other concepts of a similar kind. But Gandhi is trenchant in his view that democracy means formation of the Indian villages almost into autonomous seven lacs of rural republics with the capacity to satisfy their basic requirements by their own efforts at production. He was very much opposed to the concentration of power which he regarded as an aspect of violence.

A third element in the Gandhian theory of democracy is that Gandhi was very demanding in the pursuit of the moral criteria. He would be concerned not merely with the legal aspects of legitimacy but he would like to ban any resort to untruth. Thus, in his political vocabulary, clever manipulation, hypocritical profession and diplomatic manoeuvres dictated solely by considerations of egoistic self-interest would not have any appeal. He would condemn all types of partisanship and would stand for a moral alertness for the vindication of democratic values.

In his writings, Gandhi was concerned with violence in three contexts. First, he dealt with it as a subjective norm of inner purification and as the sole antidote to all types of deviant and untruthful conduct. As a moral ideal, he regarded it as the only way for the realisation of Truth which is God. The second context in which Gandhi discussed the problem of non-violence was the Indian freedom struggle against the military might of the British empire. He was convinced that in this field non-violence had achieved a very great success. Objective historians and political scientists are agreed that non-violent technics were primarily responsible for mobilising that strength in the country which eventually resulted in the withdrawal of the British power. The third sphere in which Gandhi discussed the problem of group non-violence was in the context of communal struggles. The carnage enacted in Noakhali and Bihar and at the time of the partition of the country evoked his deepest anguish and grief. He did regretfully acknowledge that India's had been the non-violence of the weak. The feelings of revenge, jealousy, malice and hatred that were accumulating for the years and decades were manifested in irrational acts of mad communal violence. In this field, Gandhi did acknowledge that his non-violence had not been a great success although he did refer to the bright examples of some illustrious martyrs who had sacrificed themselves in the fire of communal violence. A fourth sector in which non-violence could have been used on a mass scale but was not experimented with, was the settlement of the economic problems of the country. If Gandhi

would have been alive, possibly, he would have resorted to Satyagraha against capitalists and other feudal exploiters.

The true test of democracy, according to Gandhi, is that it attempts to replace force by social will. He wrote : "In democracy the individual will was governed and limited by the social will which was the State, which was governed by and for democracy."<sup>1</sup> Democracy and violence cannot be reconciled. Non-violence as positive love implies the thorough elimination of distrust and suspicion of the political opponents. Gandhi stressed that non-violence alone could lead to true democracy. He even went to the extent of defining democracy as the rule of unadulterated non-violence and insisted on recognising non-violence as a living political bond. According to him, the true democrat defends his personal freedom, the national freedom and the freedom of mankind through the means of non-violence.<sup>2</sup> It may be said, in partial support of Gandhi, that the growth of law and public opinion is expected to minimize the role of violence in politics.

He also said that military force is a dangerous antithesis to the free growth of the soul and, hence, it will "be a poor democracy that depends for its existence on military assistance." To him, there is a radical incompatibility between the evolution of democracy and the dependence upon the police and the army. Hence a true democracy must cease to rely on the army. He was, being a political leader, a realist however, and hence he did not cherish the utopian dream that the India of the future will do away with the army and accept complete non-violence. He wanted, nevertheless, progressive approximation to the true democracy without violence.

The march of democracy has been associated, in its earlier career, with violence. Charles I had to lose his head. The French King Louis XVI (1754-93) was guillotined by the revolutionists. The American and the French Revolutions were associated with violence. The triumph of the middle-classes, in politics, in opposition to the landed aristocracy has been associated with violence in several places. But with the growth of the procedural aspects of the functioning of democracy, emphasis has been put more and more on peaceful and legal change.

### **3. Legitimacy of Violence in Democracy**

Democracy aims at the triumph of reason,<sup>3</sup> and hence, resort to violence is antithetical to democracy. But there are species of violence which are considered legitimate in the democratic theory. At the international level, democracy would not refrain from sanc-

1 *Harijan*, September 28, 1947.

2 *Harijan*, January 1, 1947.

3 V. P. Verma, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, (Agra, L. N. Agarwal, 1967, 3rd edition), pp. 523-28.

tioning war for the legitimate safeguard of the national honour and national security. While it would be opposed to aggressive war and imperialistic aggression, it would not refrain from engaging in and justifying defensive war. It is very true that it will become difficult, in practice, to differentiate an aggressive from a defensive war ; nevertheless, it is possible that there might be consensus on finding out who the aggressor is. Democracy, certainly, would be opposed to sanction any preventive war. In internal politics, democracy would not have any objection to use violence for quelling riots and curbing disorders. It, certainly, would be willing to use violence for suppressing civil wars. Democracy would regard as valid the death penalty as well as imprisonment, imposed by the government, provided they have behind them judicial authorisation. In the field of public administration, different types of sanctions and coercive measures are regarded as legal. Democracy would also, definitely, accept as valid certain actions of the police for maintaining law and order. Thus democracy, in practice, legitimizes various types of violence and penal sanctions. It is not violence as such that democracy is opposed to. It is opposed to illegitimate, unjustified and indefensible violence.

It is clear that there are times when democracy would not restrain from sanctioning violence. It is evident thus that democracy and non-violence are not synonymous terms. Although Gandhi pointed out and rightly so, that in perfect democracy there will be perfect non-violence, we know from experience that perfection is a utopian concept and ages may pass before that perfectionist utopia can be realised.

There are, certainly, types of violence that democracy will not be willing to sanction. It will never sanction the use of violence, either for personal or group aggrandizement.

Sometimes it has been debated as to whether it is legitimate to use organised, non-violent, civil disobedience against a duly constituted authority. There is a definite hint in Gandhi's writings that such organised non-violent action was to have restricted place according to him.

#### **4. Violence in Indian History and Politics**

If we look at the structure of Indian history, we find that there have been ages in which social suppression and political and economic repression have been carried out unscrupulously. Sometimes, the social structure which was based on explicit or concealed exploitation was justified by cunning priests by invoking divine legitimacy for the system. India's social history is, to a considerable extent, the history of suppression of women, the backward sections and the tribal people. The grim exploitation and the deprivation from the good things of life of the vast millions, have been supported by myths which were fabricated by the fertile imaginations of priests.

The obscurity and difficulty of the Sanskrit language was also a factor which aided the priests and other ideological supporters of inequality and injustice in legitimizing the social system by concealing the brutalities of the processes of exploitation with a mask of divine support. Not even in the old empires of Assyria, Rome and Persia was there such social injustice perpetrated as is practised and has been practised with reference to the untouchables and other casteless people in Hindu India. Buddha, in his own limited way, waged a non-violent struggle against a social structure based on injustice. Gandhi was trenchantly opposed to all forms of social inequality, social injustice, social discrimination and social suppression. If a supporter of the traditional system would quote any religious sanction or support for the irrational *status quo*, Gandhi would refuse to see wisdom in such quotations. Non-violence must not be perverted to mean the passive acceptance of an unjustified social system. If non-violence means acquiescence in the uncivil, if it means yielding to injustice, if it means a policy of refraining from offending the perpetrators of evil, then non-violence is opposed to democracy. Democracy is a philosophy of dynamic social and political change. Hence the concealed violence inherent in an exploitationist social and economic structure has to be challenged, attacked on all fronts and changed.

One bright spot today is the constitutional right of adult suffrage. It is true that in its formal structure, adult suffrage is only a political means. But it has inherent in it, tremendous potentialities for effectuating social and economic change also. It may be hoped that with all its defects and inadequacies, at the practical level, adult suffrage will give a death-blow to an unjust social system which has been unparalleled in its vulgar manifestations of injustice and inequality. It is evident that democracy in our country with all its shortcomings, gaps and failures has, in it, tremendous potentialities for handling the implicit violence of an unjust social system.

It is perturbing that the present-day Indian politics is being increasingly marred and tarnished by violence. Sometimes important decisions have to be made merely to suit the aggressive and violent designs of an organised minority. Sometimes open and unashamed but organized violence imposes vital decisions upon groups in place of rational discussion of problems. The story of the linguistic re-organisation of states is stigmatised by violence. As a matter of fact, the violent groups have, sometimes, forced their decisions on the Indian policy-makers. Sometimes it appears paradoxical that while in international politics, specially with regard to confrontations with China and Pakistan, our policy is characterized by capitulation, appeasement, and pacifism, on the internal front, our actions are being increasingly characterized by explicit or covert violence. This increasing resort to violence is a catastrophic threat to the functioning of democracy in this country.

It is horrifying that during the last decade or so, violence is considerably on the increase in the country in several sectors of organised living. The most deplorable is the mounting tempo of violence in educational institutions. Since 1967, specially in northern and eastern India, violence has increased tremendously and terrifically in educational establishments. There has been organised caste violence directed against the weaker castes. There have been several cases in which invigilators have been threatened and even assaulted. There are instances of Vice-Chancellors being assaulted for not agreeing to extension of dates of examinations and such other trifling excuses. There have been attempts on the lives of teachers, examiners and other educational authorities. It appears that there has been a most condemnable perversion of the notions of liberty and democracy. A few faction leaders and gang masters are moving the strings from behind and the immature youth are becoming wild and riotous in the exhibition of violence. Bihar and U.P. have earned notoriety because of mounting student violence. The papers report that waves of violence have spread in Madras. To curb this violence, it is essential to go into the psychological and sociological foundations of frustrations, alienations and tensions which result in aggressive activities. A vast section of the student body feels frustrated because of the lack of good conditions of living, absence of creative channels of expression of energy as well as the frightening prospects of continued unemployment after they get out of the educational institutions. But in spite of these sociological, economic, and psychological factors which are making the student body a very vulnerable source of attack by violent emotions and feelings, it should not be forgotten that the problem involves also a law and order dimension. In some of the states, kinship loyalty has become so strong that it is difficult to punish criminal elements. Influential people, on considerations of kin and caste, become interested when a criminal is to be punished. It has been seen that, sometimes, when university and college authorities pronounce some penal sanctions upon students, some teachers and some influential men try to back the criminal sections on the sole motivation of kinship loyalty. It has become increasingly difficult to maintain law and order in the educational institutions. It is very true that those responsible for security and safety in educational institutions have to purify themselves and reform their own character, but it will be unrealistic not to consider the situation from the purely formal and technical aspect of the maintenance of law and order and discipline in these institutions. If the disease of disorder is allowed to become complicated, I am afraid, the whole trend of civilization in the country may be checked and there might be a return to the days of insecurity that characterised the early decades of the eighteenth century.

In 1967 most of the incidents of student violence occurred at the time of the general elections. In 1968 also, on the eve of by-elections, violence was on the increase in Uttar Pradesh. Hence I think that

there is some definite correlation between partisan political action and student violence. I cannot refrain from holding that the unruly and the criminal section among students are receiving some external help and encouragement from influential sections, otherwise they would not have had the boldness to challenge the pronouncements of the educational authorities and disturb law and order situation.

Since the last general elections of 1967, the left wing in the Communist Party has been deeply influenced by Maoist strategy and is occasionally taking recourse to violence. The violent activities that were noticed in Naxalbari seem to have left deep legacies which are being followed in other areas of the country as well. If the government has evidence of foreign encouragement to the Naxalite rebels, whether they operate in Bengal or in Kerala or in any other part of the country, they should be dealt with effectively and severely. No person and no group can be allowed to play lightly with India's independence.

It is also surprising that communal violence which had nearly become a thing of the past during the decade or so after independence is, for the last four or five years, again, raising its ugly head. It is mysterious that scenes of communal violence on several occasions have been enacted in industrial areas which are important places of national activity.

When Sorel wrote *Reflections on Violence*, he was defending the violence of the revolutionarily producers so that a syndicalist society could be established. Now, in the Indian context, while the employees in industrial undertakings have generally shown amenability to the acceptance of the solution of their economic grievances by the technics of conciliation, mediation and arbitration, Government employees in several departments are showing the defiant tendency to indulge in violent activities. No government worth the name can permit these employees to indulge in violent activities against itself.

Another unfortunate aspect of the Indian democratic life is the perversion of parliamentary procedures. Some of the ugly scenes of resort to force that have been witnessed during the last four to five years in the Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assemblies are undemocratic. Such tendencies should not be allowed to grow.

Several times it has been seen that in dealing with the government or for the solution of other problems, a rational and dispassionate formulation of policies becomes impossible because violence intrudes on the scene and creates confusion. Feelings are aroused and sometimes some groups would begin fast unto death to force their own points of view. The threat of self-immolation given by Fateh Singh and his associates in 1966 was deplorable in the extreme. The Indian governments at the centre and in the states have to gird up their loins and pursue a vigorous policy against rowdy elements.

Democracy, because it accepts dispersion of power and devolution of authority, need not necessarily be a weak government. If unsocial and uncivil elements will become convinced that they can get along with their acts of threats, assaults, sabotage and organised rowdyism, then civilized life will become impossible. We cannot permit the re-enactment of the scene of ugliness, incivility and indecency that were characteristic whenever the central authority had been weak in the country.

### 5. Conclusion

As a value in political philosophy and personal ethics, the element of *Abhayam* is certainly desirable. Where deep questions of conscience are concerned, the moral and spiritual man may occasionally take resort to the breaking of some unjustified law or ordinance, but he must be ready to bear the penalties that are envisaged by law. The legal system, so long as it exists, must operate effectively. Democracy provides regularised channels through which unjustified laws, decrees, ordinances etc., can be removed from statute books, but so long as the law is there, it must operate without any considerations for irrational factors. Democracy is based on the rule of law. It does prescribe avenues and means through which a law can be removed. But people should have the patience to mobilise their strength and see that a law is changed and an ordinance is repealed. But it is not possible for democracy to permit unjustified tampering with the legal system.

As interpreted by Gandhi, non-violence aims to strengthen the moral foundations of democracy. It also stands for the purification of the motives and actions of the individual. It is to add a moral dimension as a supplement to the legal dimension. Democracy, never, is to be mistaken for a weak government which can tolerate the flouting of order and the canons of civilized existence. With all his quest for love, gentleness and humility, Gandhi would have been the last person to tolerate social anarchy.

# 12

## THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SATYAGRAHA

### 1. The Origins of Satyagraha

The Gandhian technic of Satyagraha which inculcates *Agraha* or moral pressure for the sake of truth, is a natural outcome of the supreme concept of truth.<sup>1</sup> If truth is the ultimate reality, it is imperative for a votary of it to resist all encroachments against it, and it is his duty to make endless endeavours for the realisation of truth through non-violence. A votary of God who is the highest Truth and the highest reality must be utterly selfless and gentle, and should have an unconquerable determination to suffer for asserting the supremacy of spiritual and moral values. Thus alone can he vindicate his sense of devotion and loyalty to truth. Satyagraha also implies an assertion of the power of the human soul against political and economic domination, because domination amounts to a denial of truth since it takes recourse to falsehood and manipulation for maintaining itself. Thus it is the vindication of the glory of the human conscience. The latter (conscience) reinforces the non-violent battle for the victory of truth.

Gandhi had been immensely influenced by the story of King Harishchandra enshrined in Indian legends. Harishchandra's absolute and perfect loyalty to truth was accepted by him as the vindication of a great norm. Prahlada is a great example of a perfect Satyagrahi. Socrates and Jesus Christ<sup>2</sup> also practiced this law of suffering for truth. Gandhi says that Jesus who challenged the authority of the priesthood would surely have defied the Roman

- 1 Gandhi wrote in the Chapter "Women in Jail", *Satyagraha in South Africa*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, Reprint of 1961) p. 285 : "The world rests upon the bedrock of *Satya*, or Truth. *Asatya*, meaning Untruth, also means 'non-existent'; and *Satya*, or Truth, means 'that which is.' If untruth does not so much as exist, its victory is out of the question. And truth being 'that which is' can never be destroyed. This is the doctrine of Satyagraha in a nutshell."
- 2 M. K. Gandhi, "Did Jesus Co-operate?" *Young India*, January 19, 1921, p. 231, says that Jesus denounced the hypocrites, Pharisees and Sadducees and asked the people to shun them. M. K. Gandhi "Render Unto Caesar", *Young India*, March 27, 1930, p. 105, regards Jesus Christ as a non-cooperator who refused to regard temporal authority as equal to God's.

empire if need arose. He also considered Mirabai as a Satyagrahi.<sup>3</sup> He also regarded Martin Luther, Galileo and Columbus as manifesting the Satyagrahi spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi had inherited the spirit of resistance. His father Karamchand Gandhi alias Kaba Gandhi (1822-1885), the Dewan of Porbandar, had resisted the whim of the assistant political agent in Rajkota when the latter spoke insultingly of the ruler of Rajkota.

Gandhi had a fine sensitive soul which found many situations soon after his return from England, in 1891, in the contemporary social and political structure of South Africa and India which appeared confusing, perplexing and baffling. Hence he stood up against these situations on moral grounds. It is true that Gandhi had helped the British empire on different occasions because he had felt that there was the possibility of being governed least in it, but, nonetheless, once he was convinced in 1919 that the imperial system was based on injustice, he utilized against it the science of Satyagraha which he had developed in South Africa.

Discussing the origins of Satyagraha with Joseph J. Doke, Gandhi is represented to have stated :

“ ‘I remember,’ he said, ‘how one verse of a Gujarati poem, which, as a child, I learned at school, clung to me.’ In substance it was this :—

‘If a man gives you a drink of water and you give him a drink in return, that is nothing. Real beauty consists in doing good against evil.’

As a child, this verse had a powerful influence over me,<sup>5</sup> and I tried to carry it into practice. Then came the ‘Sermon on the Mount’.

3 *Speeches and Writings of M. K. Gandhi*, 3rd ed., pp. 332, 355-56. Gandhi also regarded Sudhanva as a Satyagrahi.—*Ibid.*, p. 83.

4 *Collected Works of M. Gandhi*, Vol. VIII, pp. 91-92. He found Satyagrahis even in early Islam. “Imam Hussain and his little band refused to yield to what to them appeared to be an unjust order. They knew at the time that Death alone would be their lot. If they yielded to it they felt that their manhood and their religion would be in jeopardy. They, therefore, welcomed the embrace of Death. Imam Hussain preferred the slaughter in his arms of his son and nephew for him (*sic*) and then to suffer from thirst rather than submit to what to him appeared to be an unjust order. It is my belief that the rise of Islam has been due not to the sword, but to the self-immolation alone of the Fakirs of Islam.”—(*Ibid.*, p. 333).

5 Gandhi is referring here to a Gujarati stanza of Shamal Bhatt, a 18th century literary figure, which reads thus :

“For a bowl of water give a goodly meal ;  
For a kindly greeting bow thou down with zeal ;  
For a simple penny pay thou back with gold ;  
If thy life be rescued, life do not withhold.  
Thus the words and actions of the wise regard,  
Every little service tenfold they reward.  
But the truly noble know all men as one,  
And return with gladness good for evil done.”

"‘But,’ said I, ‘surely the *Bhagavad Gita* came first?’ ‘No,’ he replied, ‘of course I knew the *Bhagavad Gita* in Sanskrit tolerably well, but I had not made its teaching in that particular a study.’<sup>6</sup> It was the New Testament which really awakened me to the rightness and value of Passive Resistance. When I read in the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ such passages as ‘Resist not him that is evil but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also’, and ‘Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven,’ I was simply overjoyed, and found my own opinion confirmed where I least expected it. The *Bhagavad Gita* deepened the impression, and Tolstoy’s *The Kingdom of God is Within You* gave it permanent form.”<sup>7</sup>

It has also been contended that the activities and technics of the British suffragettes who risked imprisonment for the realization of their goals acted as an influencing factor on Gandhi.<sup>8</sup> The latter himself appreciatively referred to the Sinn Fein movement.

- 6 In the chapter entitled “Acquaintance with Religions”, in his *Autobiography*, Gandhi says that he read the following books under the influence of his English friends towards the end of his second year in England :
- (i) The *Bhagavadgita* (and possibly also its English translation by Edwin Arnold entitled, *The Song Celestial*).
  - (ii) *The Light of Asia*, by E. Arnold.
  - (iii) Portions of *The Old Testament* and *The New Testament*.

With regard to the impression of *The New Testament* he says : “....the New Testament produced a different impression, especially the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ which went straight to my heart. I compared it with the *Gita*. The verses, ‘But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil : but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man take away thy coat let him have the cloke too’, delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of Shamal Bhatt’s ‘For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal’ etc. My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the *Gita*, *The Light of Asia* and the ‘Sermon on the Mount’. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly.”—M. K. Gandhi’s *Autobiography*, p. 49.

7 Joseph J. Doke, *M. K. Gandhi*, (London, 1909), Reprinted Varanasi, Akhil Sarva Sewa Sangh Prakashan, pp. 133-34, 1959. Rufus M. Jones, “Mahatma Gandhi and Soul-Force”, Radhakrishnan (ed.), *M. Gandhi*, pp. 174-77, has referred to St. Francis, James Nayler (17th century), John Woolman (18th century Quaker) and William Law (18th century English mystic) as exponents of “soul-force”.

8 E. Stanley Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 110 ; M. K. Gandhi, *Collected Works*, IX, p. 324, refers to his having attended a meeting of the suffragettes in 1909 and met Mrs. Pankhurst (1858-1928). He wrote : “We have a great deal to learn from these ladies and their movement.” Gandhi admired their spirit of resistance and suffering and wanted that their courage should be emulated, but he also wrote that “their example should teach us to eschew violent methods.”—(*Ibid.*, p. 448). But in London speech Gandhi is stated to have opposed tactics of the suffragettes. “Mr. Gandhi did not approve of the militant tactics of the suffragettes for the reason that they were meeting body force with body force, and not using the higher power of soul force ; violence begot violence.”—(*Speeches and Writings*, p. 90).

In one of his articles, he refers to the roots of the Sinn Fein movement in Austria-Hungary.<sup>9</sup> He mentions the name of a Hungarian named Dick who "taught the people that they should not pay any taxes to Austria, should not serve any Austrian officers, and even forget the very name of Austria."

## 2. Thoreau And Gandhi

Henry David Thoreau (July 12, 1817—May 6, 1862) was a champion of the free spirit and was repelled by the established political and economic routine of the time. His spirit yearned for communion with nature. He had been inspired by the transcendentalism of Emerson (1803-1882) and the pantheistic immanentism of the Bhagavadgita. A Harvard graduate had also studied Buddhist religious works. In one of his poems entitled "Inspiration", he wrote :

But now there comes unsought, unseen,  
Some clear divine electuary,  
And I who had but sensual been,  
Grow sensible, and as God is, am wary.  
X                    X                    X                    X  
A clear and ancient harmony  
Pierces my soul through all its din,  
As through its utmost melody,—  
Farther behind than they—farther within.

But besides this element of mystic communion with God and nature,<sup>10</sup> in Thoreau, we also discover an element of moral individualism culminating in his concept of civil disobedience which represents a protest against the established and institutionalized conventions of the day. He sanctions rebellion against unfounded political practices and norms. He wrote his anti-governmental treatise *Civil Disobedience* (1849) at the age of thirty-two.<sup>11</sup> He was a rebel who challenged the foundations of the state in the name of reason and wisdom. He wrote :

"I saw that the State was half-witted, that it was timid as a lone woman with her silver spoons, and that it did not know its friends from its foes, and I lost all my remaining respect for it, and pitied it . . . It (the State) is not armed with superior wit or honesty, but with superior physical strength. *I was not born to be forced.* I will breathe after my own fashion. Let us see who is the strongest . . . They only can force me who obey a higher law than I." In fact, I quietly declare war with the State, after my fashion, though

9 M. K. Gandhi, "Benefits of Passive Resistance", *Collected Works*, Vol. VII, pp. 213-14. Gandhi translates *Sinn Fein* with Swadeshi.

10 Gandhi has stated that he had read Thoreau's *Walden* in 1906.

11 H. D. Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*.

I will still make what use and get what advantage of her I can, as is usual in such cases.”<sup>12</sup>

According to Thoreau : “A wise man will only be useful as a man, and will not submit to be ‘clay’ . . . .” He was thus, evidently, a prophet of liberty.<sup>13</sup> He wrote : “Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator ? Why has every man a conscience then ?”

During his term of second imprisonment (October-December, 1908) in the South African Satyagraha, Gandhi read Emerson, and in a letter to Manilal Gandhi written on March 25, 1909, he stated that Emerson, Ruskin and Mazzini “confirm the view that education does not mean a knowledge of letters but it means character-building.” In a letter written to Franklin D. Roosevelt on July 1, 1942, Gandhi had stated : “I have profited greatly by the writings of Thoreau and Emerson.” Gandhi appreciatively referred to the teachings of Thoreau.<sup>14</sup> Like Thoreau, he believed that we should be men first and subjects afterwards. In an article in the *Young India*, Gandhi writes :

“Men like Thoreau brought about the abolition of slavery by their personal examples. Says Thoreau, ‘I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name,— if ten honest men only—aye, if one honest man, in this State of Massachusetts ceasing to hold slaves were actually to withdraw from this co-partnership and be locked up in the country gaol, therefore, it would be the abolition of slavery in America. For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be, what is once well done is done for ever.’ Again he says, ‘I have contemplated the imprisonment of the offender rather than seizure of his goods— though both will serve the same purpose, because they who assert the purest right and consequently are most dangerous to corrupt State, commonly have not spent much time in accumulating property.’”<sup>15</sup>

Both Gandhi and Thoreau are agreed in thinking that an unjust law should be broken. Thoreau wrote : “ . . . if (injustice) is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter-friction to stop

12 *Ibid.*, pp. 100-01. (Our Italics).

13 In his *Civil Obedience*, p. (106), Thoreau wrote : “There will never be a really free and enlightened state until the state comes to recognise the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all his own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining a state at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbour.”

14 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, (Ahmedabad, Navjivan Publishing House), pp. 3, 115.

15 *Young India*, July 7, 1920.

the machine (of government)."<sup>16</sup> He did refuse to pay taxes. But Gandhi rightly stated that Thoreau was not a complete champion of non-violence. Furthermore, Thoreau limited his breach of governmental laws to the revenue law. But the dynamics of Satyagraha, as formulated by Gandhi, are broader and more universally applicable. From the family to the village, to the Brahmanical orthodoxy and to the state—wheresoever one meets with injustice and untruth—one can resort to Satyagraha. In his *Autobiography*, Gandhi has referred to some sweet experiences of Satyagraha practised in his own family life.<sup>17</sup> He said that the alphabet of *Ahimsa* is learnt in the domestic school<sup>18</sup> and can be extended to national and even international levels. Non-violent Satyagraha is a most potent weapon and it "enables a child, a woman or even a decrepit old man to resist the mightiest government successfully." During the various battles and wars after the thirties of the present century, Gandhi felt, as mentioned earlier, that the Abyssinians, the Spaniards, the Czechs, the Chinese and the Poles could have offered Satyagraha against the Fascist, Nazi and Japanese aggressors. Thus the Gandhian theory of Satyagraha is conceived, in its applicability, at a more comprehensive level than the civil disobedience of Thoreau. Hence, sometimes, Gandhi used the concept "civil resistance" to differentiate his theory from that of the concept of "civil disobedience"<sup>19</sup> as popularized by Thoreau. Resistance is a more dynamic and effective process of the assertion of the pure moral will than disobedience.

The study of Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* had confirmed Gandhi's own sentiments for launching a movement of protest against oppression. But the movement of resistance to the political authority in South Africa was well advanced since its formal inception on September 11, 1906, before Gandhi got a copy of Thoreau's book in 1907. Gandhi always held that his own experiments in the path of what was later called Satyagraha and was earlier called passive resistance only received confirmations from his perusal of Thoreau's work. But he was categorical in his statement that Thoreau did not act as the germinal source for his own ideas. He wrote :

"The statement that I derived my idea of Civil Disobedience from the writings of Thoreau is wrong. The resistance to authority in South Africa was well advanced before I got the essay of Thoreau on Civil Disobedience. But the movement

16 H. D. Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*, p. 95.

17 M. K. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, Part IV, Chapter 19.

18 In an article entitled "How to Cultivate Ahimsa", (*Harijan*, July 21, 1940), *Non-violence*, I, p. 412, Gandhi pleads that the votary of *Ahimsa* should practice it in relations with parents, children, wife, servants and dependents. Successful practice of *Ahimsa* in the domestic field marks the transition to its use in the political field.—(*Ibid.*, p. 410).

19 In an article in the *Young India*, July 19, 1928, Gandhi, however, gave a limited application to the term 'civil resistance'.

was then known as Passive Resistance. As it was incomplete, I had coined the word Satyagraha for the Gujarati readers. When I saw the title of Thoreau's great essay, I began the use of the phrase to explain our struggle to the English readers. But I found that even 'Civil Disobedience' failed to convey the full meaning of the struggle. I, therefore, adopted the phrase, 'Civil Resistance'. Non-violence was always an integral part of our struggle."

Gandhi does not acknowledge Thoreau's influence on the genesis of his Satyagraha philosophy although he confesses being inspired by him (Thoreau). A perusal of his *Collected Works*, Vol. VII, would indicate that in 1907 Gandhi was considerably influenced by Thoreau. He published two small articles in the *Indian Opinion*, in Gujarati, on September 7, 1907 and September 14, 1907, summarizing Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. The Theoretical Foundations of Satyagraha

(a) *Differences between Satyagraha and Passive Resistance.* Sometimes the Gandhian Satyagraha is confused with the Passive Resistance<sup>21</sup> advocated by the Quakers. Passive resistance also, generally includes the movement of the suffragettes and the resistance of the Non-conformists. Gandhi has cited three examples of passive resistance in his *Satyagraha in South Africa* : (i) The opposition offered by the Non-conformists against the Education Act passed by the British Parliament ; (ii) the opposition offered by the suffragist

20 On p. 267 of the *Collected Works*, Vol. VII, there occurs the statement : "When we shall have resisted the law to the last, we shall be regarded as so many Thoreaus in miniature. By this time the readers of the *Opinion* (*Indian Opinion*) must be aware of who Thoreau was." In another article entitled "For Passive Resisters", *Indian Opinion*, October 26, 1907, *Collected Works*, Vol. VII, p. 305, he quoted these extracts from Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* : "I heartily accept the motto : 'That government is best which governs least' ; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe : 'That government is best which governs not at all' ; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient ; but most governments are usually and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient.

After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period continue, to rule is not because they are most likely to be in the right nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest. But a government in which the majority rule in all cases cannot be based on justice, even as far as men understand it."

21 The *Indian Opinion* had announced a Prize for the Gujarati equivalent of "Passive resistance". Four terms were suggested : *Pratyupaya* (प्रत्युपाय), *Kashatadhin Prativartana* (कष्टाधीन प्रतिवर्तन), *Dridha Pratipaksha* (दृढ़ प्रतिपक्ष), and *Sadagraha* (सदाग्रह). Maganlal Gandhi had suggested Sadagraha which was accepted by Gandhi in the form of Satyagraha.—*Indian Opinion*, March 7, 1908, *The Collected Works of M. K. Gandhi*, Vol. VIII, pp. 139-42.

movement, (iii) the Doukhobours of Russia were also passive resisters. But there are three vital differences between the western theory and practice of passive resistance and Gandhi's Satyagraha.<sup>22</sup> To begin with, Satyagraha is a more dynamic force than passive resistance because it contemplates prolonged mass action in resistance to injustice.

Secondly, passive resistance may be compatible with internal violence towards the enemy. But Satyagraha stresses continuous cleansing of the mind and has no place for hatred. It emphasizes even inner purity. In the chapter "Satyagraha vs. Passive Resistance", in his *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Gandhi points out that passive resistance may be offered alongside of arms. It often, is looked upon as a preparation for arms. But Satyagraha and physical violent resistance are absolute antagonists. Hence Gandhi differentiated his non-violence from Sinn Feinism because he would not sanction violence in his technics in any form.

Satyagraha goes beyond passive resistance in the stress on a spiritual and moral teleology because the final source of hope and consolation for the Satyagrahi is God. Hence Gandhi wrote :

"Satyagraha differs from Passive Resistance as the North Pole from the South.<sup>23</sup> The latter has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end, whereas the former has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form."<sup>24</sup>

It must, however, be mentioned here that in the early days Gandhi himself called his movement as "passive resistance" and his workers as "passive resisters".

Finally, passive resistance is mainly contemplated at a political level. Satyagraha, as has been earlier pointed out in the analysis of the differences between Gandhi and Thoreau, can be practised at all levels—domestic, social and political. In 1946, for example, Gandhi advocated the organization of Satyagraha brigades in every village and in every block of buildings in cities to avert communal strife.

(b) *Differences between Satyagraha and Passive Resistance of the Swadeshi Period.* During the Swadeshi movement, Tilak and

22 Jawaharlal Nehru, "War 1914-1918", *Glimpses of World History*, p. 624, points out that *Satyagraha* is not passive resistance because it is active, is not non-resistance although it stresses non-violence, but is "non-violent warfare." He also calls it "a peaceful rebellion, a most civilized form of warfare"—(*Ibid.*, p. 718).

23 See Gandhi's first letter to Leo Tolstoy dated October 1, 1909, in Kalidas Nag, *Tolstoy and Gandhi*, (Patna, Pustak Bhandar, 1950), pp. 59-62.

24 M. K. Gandhi's statement to the Hunter Committee.

the Extremist schools also advocated passive resistance. But there are two differences between the Gandhian Satyagraha and the techniques of the New Party of the Indian Extremists in the Swadeshi period. First, the Gandhian theory of Satyagraha is far more comprehensive than passive resistance as advocated in India in 1906-1908. The passive resistance of 1906-1908 at the time of anti-partition agitation<sup>25</sup> was a political technic of limited application. Sometimes it meant only Swadeshi and boycott, while sometimes by Aurobindo in his articles on "The Doctrine of Passive Resistance", it was extended to cover even disobedience of unjust laws and decrees. But the Gandhian Satyagraha includes a more comprehensive set of techniques and methods than even this extended concept of passive resistance of Aurobindo. Secondly, Tilak and Aurobindo would not condemn violence on moral grounds. They themselves were not violent revolutionists, but, nevertheless, they would not condemn the revolutionists on moral grounds although Tilak would occasionally criticize them on grounds of expediency. Gandhi, on the other hand, almost accepted the absolutism of *Ahimsa*.<sup>26</sup> Gandhi came into contact with some of the Extremists in London in 1909. He described them as "the party of violence".

(c) *Theory of Satyagraha.* Satyagraha is the inherent birth-right of a person.<sup>27</sup> Gandhi wrote :

"I wish I could persuade everybody that 'civil disobedience' is the inherent right of a citizen. He dare not give it up without ceasing to be a man.... It is a birthright that cannot be surrendered without surrender of one's self-respect. 'Civil Disobedience' therefore becomes a sacred duty when the state has become lawless, or which is the same thing as corrupt. And a citizen that barters with such a state shares its corruption or lawlessness."<sup>28</sup>

Since Gandhi regards Satyagraha as a right inherent in the human being, it is evident that he would not consider it as a mere social or political right arising from the establishment of social and political relations. He would regard Satyagraha as an inalienable right of man which may be considered, by implication, as a right antecedent to the organized modern state since the latter emerges only since the 15th century A. D. Gandhi was absolutely devoted to God and he would also regard Satyagraha as a moral prerogative

25 M. K. Gandhi, "Lajpat Rai's Release", *Collected Works*, Vol. VII, p. 361, refers to the success of Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh who through their deportation got the repeal of Punjab Lands Act. He says, "This success is a strong proof of the effectiveness of passive resistance."

26 He points out, *Collected Works*, Vol. IX, p. 509, that violence results in the "destruction of true morality."

27 *Young India*, January 5, 1922.

28 *Ibid.*

of the human being.<sup>29</sup> But it is not merely a sacred right, it can also be a sacred duty.<sup>30</sup> If a government does not represent the will of the people and if it begins to support dishonesty and terrorism,<sup>31</sup> then it should be disobeyed.

Satyagraha implies the exercise of the purest soul-force against all injustice, oppression and exploitation. Literally, it means "Truth Pressure" and denotes the operation of the soul or Spirit. Suffering and trust are attributes of soul-force. Along with his advocacy of the ineradicable and inalienable right of resistance against any oppressive system, Gandhi upheld the sanctity of positive love, and like Tulsidas, he also regarded love or kindness (*Daya*) as the basis of Dharma. According to Gandhi, the fighter for the cause of justice should create within himself a constellation of feelings for collective welfare, altruism and heroic transforming love, because Satyagraha is inconsistent with jealousy towards or hatred of the opponent. The opponent has to be converted and not coerced. Satyagraha wants, not to endanger the opponent, but to overwhelm him by the overflowing power of forgiveness, love and innocence. It does not flourish on the basis of malice, ill-feeling and anger, but is the application of the gentle process of conversion by love<sup>32</sup> and is based on the belief that the concentration of the energy of love can be irresistible. Satyagraha or protracted effort at conversion can be applied both against the government and against the social czars and leaders of orthodoxy. Thus Satyagraha is both a philosophy of life and a technic of politics and it even contemplates stupendous mass action for paralysing the total structure of a despotic government. Nevertheless, the basis of this mass movement is always individual suffering.

A Satyagrahi who wants to vindicate his inherent, sacred right should be prepared to bear all kinds of suffering. Self-suffering, thus, replaces retaliation which has been traditionally recognized as the technic of the redemption of right. If Hampden and Wat Taylor would not have been able to bear suffering they could not

29 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 174, (*Young India*, January 1, 1922) : "It is therefore possible to question the wisdom of applying civil disobedience in respect of a particular act or law ; it is possible to advise delay and caution. But the right itself cannot be allowed to be questioned."

30 Gandhi wrote : "Non-cooperation with evil is a sacred duty". M. K. Gandhi, "Duty of Disloyalty", *Young India*, March 27, 1930 ; *Satyagraha*, p. 238 : Disobedience of the law of an evil state is therefore a duty."

31 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 120.

32 M. K. Gandhi, "Vykom Satyagraha" *Young India*, May 1, 1924. In Satyagraha, there is no attempt to coerce or terrorize the opponent but the aim is to convert him. Expounding the Gandhian theory of Satyagraha, Jayaprakash Narayan, "A Plea for Gandhism", *Spark*, (Patna), January 10, 1954 : says, "...any peaceful action is not satyagraha. Satyagraha is based on faith in the possibility of change of heart. ....Satyagraha cannot be a partisan or a class struggle. Its appeal is to all parties and classes. (Our Italics).

raise the standard of revolt.<sup>33</sup> The aspirant after the vindication of truth has necessarily to undergo all types of suffering for its sake. Real, organic non-violence based on suffering can become a mighty force and can be used against the most powerful government. Gandhi wrote in an article :

“Suffering is the mark of the human tribe. It is an eternal law. The mother suffers so that her child may live. Life comes out of death. No country has ever risen without being purified through the fire of suffering. . . . It is impossible to do away with the law of suffering which is the one indispensable condition of our being. Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone. . . . the purer the suffering the greater is the progress.”<sup>34</sup>

*Ahimsa*, which is means for the practice of Satyagraha, meant for Gandhi, infinite love and this in its turn meant infinite capacity for suffering. He wrote :

“Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. . . . I have ventured to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice, the law of suffering. The Rishis who discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence were greater geniuses than Newton, greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realized their uselessness and taught a weary world that salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence. . . . The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the Rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species, as violence is the law of the brute. This dignity of the man requires obedience to a higher law—to the strength of the spirit. . . . I want India to practise non-violence, being conscious of her strength and power, I want India to recognize that she has a *soul*<sup>35</sup> that cannot perish and that can rise triumphant above every physical weakness and defy the physical combination of a whole world.”<sup>36</sup>

The Gandhian theory of Satyagraha or dynamic soul-force, thus, is based on the acceptance of the concept of suffering for the vindication of truth and justice. Satyagraha is, in its inmost essence, an attempt at self-purification through suffering. It signifies a genuine, intense and sincere quest for the vindication of Truth, which is God, through suffering. It is, hence, based on an invincible belief in the ultimate triumph of divine justice.

33 M. K. Gandhi, “The Law of Suffering”, *Young India*, June 16, 1920.

34 *Young India*, August 11, 1290.

35 (*Our Italics*). The use of the term “soul” is significant.

36 *Young India*, April 6, 1921.

The deliberate acceptance of suffering for a great cause not only purifies and ennobles the sufferer, but it creates a powerful social situation of invincible potency whose dynamic effect almost physically compels the oppressor to yield to the demands of truth and justice,<sup>37</sup> because the voluntary acceptance of suffering certainly does make an appeal to the implicit moral sense of the oppressor. Its intensity would show the hollowness of the moral foundations of the antagonist's position. Furthermore, it would also solicit the sympathy of the vast number of people who may not be immediately involved in the situation.

Thus suffering serves three purposes. First, it purifies the sufferers. Secondly, it makes a direct appeal to the soul of the oppressor. Thirdly, it intensifies favourable public opinion. The potency of suffering is revealed also in the history of early Christianity. Jesus Christ is a symbol of victorious suffering. Against the imperialism of Rome, early Christianity offers several examples of ennobling martyrdom.

It is true that the sacrifice of one evokes sympathetic feelings in others and thus big movements are produced. But the success of Satyagraha depends on individual purification and discipline. In armed struggles, the stress is on collective attack and defence. But in a Satyagraha struggle, the individual effort at self-suffering and the conversion of the heart of the oppressor is the vital element, because Satyagraha as soul-force is the force of love. It is based on the conception that triumph against injustice can be the achievement of only the moral will, because the active non-violent resistance of the "heroic meek" makes an immediate appeal to the heart of the oppressor.

The concept of Satyagraha is based on the old Hindu tradition of the victorious power of *Tapasya* or penances. It is certainly not correct to interpret it in terms of the Freudian concept of "masochism" as some western and Indian interpreters<sup>38</sup> of Gandhism have done. Nor was Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha or spiritual resistance a psychological "compensation" for his own physical frailty. It

37 According to Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 236, two things are essential—(i) Righteousness of cause—Good End, and (ii) Purity of Weapon—Good Means. Gandhi believed that if the means are clean, God is necessarily present there with his blessings.

38 John Gunther, *Inside Asia*, (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1939), pp. 392, 404. Glorney Bolton, *The Tragedy of Gandhi*, (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1934), p. 19, says that suffering is a "feminine and masochistic doctrine.... Non-violence may involve suffering ; but the suffering does not of itself justify non-violence." M. N. Roy, "Psycho-analysis of Gandhism", *Problem of Freedom*, (Calcutta, Renaissance Publishers, 1945), pp. 28-38, also repeats the thesis that Gandhi was a masochistic personality. But it should be pointed out that Gandhi, unlike the medieval European mystics did not exult in suffering. He had no craving for suffering for its own sake. Like a man of enough common-sense he is only pleading for undergoing suffering in a just cause.

proceeded from his deep belief in the holiness, purity and sanctity of the human spirit which can never permanently brook any injustice. Because he was an advocate of truth and right from his early youth, he was opposed to force and instructed people to take recourse to Satyagraha for the vindication of moral will. His firm faith in the supremacy of God turned him into a Satyagrahi or a resister against barbarity and injustice.

#### 4. Forms and Technics of Satyagraha

There are different technics of Satyagraha :

(1) Like Muhammad, Gandhi would begin to fast whenever he would be faced with a moral crisis. He held that fasting sets the soul free for efficacious prayer. It was his firm belief that the great teachers of the world have "derived extraordinary powers for the good of humanity and attained clarity of vision through fasting and prayer."<sup>39</sup> Fasting can be one extreme form of Satyagraha but it has to be applied only against those who are bound by ties of close personal affection,<sup>40</sup> or are responsive to moral persuasion.<sup>41</sup> The several fasts that Gandhi undertook to protest against different abuses were dictated by his inner light or 'the candle of moral reason.' In 1924, Gandhi undertook a fast of twenty-one days to bring about Hindu-Moslem unity. In 1932, he began a "Fast unto Death" to undo Ramsay MacDonald's Communal Award. In 1933, he undertook a fast of twenty-one days for purification. He also fasted in 1939—what he called "the ill-fated Rajkot fast. In South Africa, he fasted only for the purpose of self-purification but his famous fasts undertaken in India in 1924, 1932, 1933 and 1943 had also social and political objectives. His fasts in Calcutta in August, 1947, and in Delhi in January, 1948, were undertaken for the purpose of effecting communal unity and concord. In terms of the actual success obtained it can be said that these fasts did have purifying social and political influences. But Gandhi was categorical in his view that fasting should be used as the last resort when all other technics have been explored but have proved wanting. It has to be resorted to only when absolutely necessary. There is no room for imitation in fasts. Ridiculous fasts have to be avoided at all costs. Only he who has inner strength should take recourse to it and should take to it as a matter of doing his duty and should not be only thinking of the results. It should be undertaken at an irrepressible

39 M. K. Gandhi, *To Hindus and Muslims*.

40 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, pp. 313-14, says : "Satyagraha in the form of fasting cannot be undertaken as against an opponent." He also says, *ibid.*, pp. 181-83, you cannot fast against a tyrant, for it will be a species of violence done to him... Fasting can be resorted to against a lover, not to extort rights but to reform him."

41 J. C. Smuts, "Gandhi's Political Method", in S. Radhakrishnan (ed. *M. Gandhi*, pp. 296-301). Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses*, p. 718, says : "(Satyagraha) put us on our best behaviour and seemed to put the adversary in the wrong."

inner call to vindicate denied justice. As the author of *Satyagraha*, Gandhi had laid it down that those who wanted to undertake fasts should seek his permission in writing.

Some people criticized the technic of fasting as coercive. Gandhi, however, considered fasting even unto death as an integral part of *Satyagraha* programme and as the greatest and most effective weapon in its armoury. According to him fasting and prayer give—

- (i) the requisite discipline,
- (ii) the spirit of self-sacrifice,
- (iii) humility, and
- (iv) resoluteness of will.

According to Jan Christian Smuts, the technic of persuasion by self-starvation becomes effective by arousing the emotions of fear, shame, repentance, sympathy and humanity.

(2) Voluntary migration can be another form of *Satyagraha*. “Tyranny is a kind of plague and when it is likely to make us angry or weak it is wisdom to leave the scene of such temptation.”<sup>42</sup> Gandhi, hence, even supported Hijrat.<sup>43</sup> There are historical references to voluntary migration. The *Exodus* refers to the planned flight of the Israelites. In Russia, there was the flight of the Doukhobours, who were non-violent to Canada.<sup>44</sup>

(3) Hartal or peaceful stoppage of work is another form of *Satyagraha*.<sup>45</sup> In the Ahmedabad strike of 1918, the strike of the workers was supplemented by the fast of Gandhi. According to an interview to the Associated Press representative a “general strike” was not outside his contemplation for ending the rule of the British.

42 M. K. Gandhi, “Bardoli on Trial”, *Young India*, May 31, 1928.

43 Gandhi, “Crusade against Non-cooperation”, *Young India*, August 4, 1920, p. 4, regards Muhammad’s flight from Mecca as an example of non-cooperation.

44 *Harijan*, January 6, 1940.

45 M. K. Gandhi “sympathetic strikes”, *Young India*, Sept., 22, 1921, laid down a few conditions of strike :

- “(i) There should be no strike without a real grievance.
- (ii) There should be no strike, if the persons concerned are not able to support themselves out of their own savings or by engaging in some temporary occupations, such as carding, spinning and weaving. Strikers should never depend upon public subscriptions or other charity.
- (iii) Strikers must fix an unalterable minimum demand, and declare it before embarking upon their strike.”

Motilal Nehru in his presidential speech at the Amritsar Congress in 1919 stated that the *hartal* was not to be linked to the general strike. He said : “..the *hartal* in India is a spiritual weapon, the old time method of showing sorrow, of having grievances redressed by patient suffering. It has from time immemorial been resorted to express grief at a national calamity, sorrow at the loss of a loved citizen. It is not used as a threat nor as a weapon against the forces of law and order.” But I think that Motilal’s purely moral interpretation of *hartal* is not correct. In modern Indian politics, *hartal*, whatever its origin, is more or less identical with the strike.

It may be pointed out that the dramatic concept of the general strike has been popularized by the French Syndicalists like G. Sorel and others.

(4) Peaceful picketing is also a valid and useful form of Satyagraha.<sup>46</sup> It was successfully resorted to during the Indian freedom struggle. Its legitimacy was accepted even by the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March 4, 1931.

(5) Gandhi would not consider the 'scorched earth'<sup>47</sup> policy to be a form of Satyagraha. He also ruled out underground activities,<sup>48</sup> even though entirely innocent, as a part of legitimate fight for freedom based on truth and non-violence.<sup>49</sup> In an answer to a question, Gandhi wrote that there was violence in damaging property, i.e.,

- (a) destroying rails,
- (b) burning *thanas* when they are not occupied,

#### 46 M. K. Gandhi, "How To Do Picketing", *Young India*, April 24, 1930 :

1. At least ten women are required for picketing a liquor or foreign cloth shop. They must choose a leader from among themselves.

2. They should all first go in a deputation to the dealer and appeal to him to desist from carrying on the traffic and present him with leaflets setting forth facts and figures regarding drink or foreign cloth, as the case may be. Needless to say the leaflets should be in the language understood by the dealer.

3. If the dealer refuses to suspend traffic, the volunteers should guard the shop leaving the passage free and make a personal appeal to the would-be purchasers.

4. The volunteers should carry banners or light boards bearing warnings in bold letters against buying foreign cloth or indulging in intoxicating drinks, as the case may be.

5. Volunteers should be as far as possible in uniforms.

6. Volunteers should at frequent intervals sing suitable *bhajans* bearing on the subject.

7. Volunteers should prevent compulsion or interference by men.

8. On no account should vulgarity, abuse, threat or unbecoming language be used.

9. The appeal must always be to the head and the heart, never to fear or force.

10. Men should on no account congregate near the place of picketing nor block the traffic. But they should carry on propaganda generally through the area against foreign cloth and drink. They should help and organize processions of women to parade through the area carrying the message of temperance and *khadi* and the necessity of boycott of drink and foreign cloth.

11. There should be at the back of these picketing units a network of organizations for spreading the message of the *Takli* and the *Charkha* and thinking out new leaflets and new lines of propaganda.

12. There should be an absolutely accurate and systematic account of all receipts and expenditure. This should be periodically audited. This again should be done by men under the supervision of women. The whole scheme presupposes on the part of men a genuine respect for women and sincere desire for their rise.'

47 M. K. Gandhi, "Scorched Earth", *Harijan*, April 12, 1942.

48 Press Statement, July 28, 1944.

49 *Satyagraha*, p. 371.

- (c) cutting telegraph poles, and
- (d) burning post boxes, etc.

This implies that he would rule out these activities as part of Satyagraha.

(6) There are some other more widespread and large-scale technics of Satyagraha. Non-cooperation with the evil-doer is a mild form<sup>50</sup> but can be an immensely potent technic when undertaken on a mass scale.<sup>51</sup> Non-cooperation is the activisation of love for the redress of wrongs. It can be practised both at the domestic and national levels. There can be non-cooperation between a father and his son as well between an imperial oppressor and the citizens. Gandhi has given several analogies for the support of non-cooperation. For example, non-cooperation is resorted to if the headmaster or the father or the chairman of a corporation is unjust. Similarly, if the government perpetrates an act of grave injustice, the subjects should withdraw their co-operation and thus make the ruler give up the policy of wickedness.<sup>52</sup> But whatsoever be the level of its application, the aim is always to convert the opponent and hence it is to be considered punitive and vindictive. It really aims to touch the heart of the opponent.

Since non-cooperation is based on love, it cannot be consistent with hatred and violence. It is an attempt to evolve true order based on reason and justice in society. Violent activities result in disorder and become the prelude to licence and degeneration. Gandhi claimed that his Non-cooperation movement was not designed against the British people. Neither did he contemplate injury to the Lancashire industrialists. His principal aim was to instil courage, tenacity and steadfast fearlessness in the Indian people. This implied a sincere adherence to the moral vows and the effective pursuit of the Constructive Programme. Hence although there was negativism stated in the term 'Non-cooperation', really speaking it was a positive philosophy of constructive social and national development.

50 Thoreau, in his book, *Civil Disobedience*, also upheld the concept of non-cooperation. He wrote : "I do not hesitate to say that those who call themselves Abolitionists should at once effectually withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the government of Massachusetts, and not wait till they constitute a majority of one, before they suffer the right to prevail through them. I think that it is enough if they have God on their side, without waiting for that other one. Moreover, any man more right than his neighbours constitutes a majority of one already." Tolstoy also advocated technics of resistance through non-cooperation. He wrote, "Letter to a Hindu", *Tolstoy and Gandhi*, p. 93 : "Do not resist the evil-doer and take no part in doing so, either in the violent deeds of the administration, in the law courts, the collection of taxes, or above all in soldiering and no one will be able to enslave you."

51 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 169, did, however, point out that the Indian Non-cooperation was a right and a duty but not an act of love, because it had been undertaken by a weaker people in self-defence.

52 Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

The most spectacular example of non-cooperation was the movement of 1920-1922 in India, aimed to redress the wrongs of the Khilaifat and the Punjab massacres and for the attainment of Swaraj. Gandhi had outlined his programme in a statement issued on March 10, 1920. The policy of non-cooperation was approved by the special session of the Indian National Congress held in September, 1920, in Calcutta by 1,886 votes against 884. The items of the program me<sup>53</sup> were as follows :—

- (i) surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in Local Bodies ;
- (ii) refusal to attend Government levees, durbars, and other official and semi-official functions held by Government officials, or in their honour ;
- (iii) gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or controlled by Government, and, in place of such schools and colleges, the establishment of national schools and colleges in the various Provinces ;
- (iv) gradual boycott of British Courts by lawyers and litigants, and the establishment of private arbitration courts by their aid for the settlement of private disputes ;
- (v) refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia ;
- (vi) withdrawal by candidates of their candidature for election to the Reformed Councils, and refusal on the part of voters to vote for any candidate who may, despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election ;
- (vii) boycott of foreign goods ;<sup>54</sup>
- (viii) laying down of arms and the suspension of taxes were the two last stages of Non-cooperation.

53 Explaining the place of social boycott in the Non-cooperation Movement, Gandhi, "Social Boycott", *Young India*, February 16, 1921, stated : "Social boycott is an age-old institution. It is coeval with caste, . . . It is based upon the notion that a community is not bound to extend its hospitality or service to an excommunicate. . . . social boycott is applicable and effective when it is not felt as a punishment and accepted by the object of boycott as a measure of discipline." To be admissible in a campaign of non-violence social boycott should never savour of inhumanity but should be civilized.

54 Moving the resolution for the adoption of the Nehru Report, Gandhi had said that if the Report was not accepted by December 31, 1929, or if rejected earlier "Congress will organise a non-violent non-cooperation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such manner as is settled." Thus it is clear that non-payment of taxes is a legitimate but extreme measure in the theory of Non-cooperation. Gandhi, "Non-Payment of Taxes," *Young India*, January 26, 1922, regards Civil non-payment of taxes as the last stage in Non-cooperation Movement. He wrote : "Civil non-payment of taxes is indeed the last stage in non-cooperation. We must not resort to it till we have tried the other forms of civil disobedience."

The Non-cooperation Movement was intensified in 1921 but was suspended in 1922. It was a phenomenal manifestation of mass awakening and brought about a revival of Indian manhood. It was a great movement for the restoration of lost liberties, and Sir George Lloyed, the then Governor of Bombay, admitted that it had come within an inch of success.

Rabindranath Tagore had criticized Non-cooperation as being antithetical to the historical ideal of synthetic universalism of which India had been the spokesman for centuries. He considered it a repugnant creed of narrowness, and negation. But Gandhi's argument was more realistic and pungent.<sup>55</sup> He rightly pleaded that co-operation postulated equality and trust. Co-operation was meaningless in the context of political degradation and humiliation. In place of imposed co-operation, it was necessary to promote voluntary co-operation based on the general will of the people. The Non-cooperation Movement was not aimed against the English people, but it certainly meant a determined refusal to yield to the whims of the English administrators in India. Gandhi confessed that he himself had been a devoted collaborationist with Great Britain, but repeated betrayals by the imperial power had turned him into a staunch non-cooperator.<sup>56</sup>

(7) Civil Disobedience of the laws of the government goes beyond non-cooperation.<sup>57</sup> It is an active, strong and extreme form of Satyagraha.

Gandhi made a distinction between civil disobedience and civil resistance.<sup>58</sup> The difference can be thus stated :—

(i) *Civil Disobedience*—is of the laws and rules constituted by authorities.

(ii) *Civil Resistance*—in Bardoli, e.g. It refers to the non-payment of a portion of tax which the aggrieved ryots contend has been improperly and unjustly imposed on them. He meant by the word "civil", in the concept of civil disobedience, a sense of discrimination, discipline, civility and non-violence.<sup>59</sup> He did recognize that criminal disobedience could lead to social and political disintegration but not civil disobedience and, consequently, any attempt to put

55 *Tagore-Gandhi Controversy*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Trust, 1961), pp. 41-82.

56 On September 27, 1932, Gandhi stated : "Despite my repeated declarations it is not generally recognised that by instinct I am a co-operator, my very non-cooperation is intended to purge co-operation of all meanness and falsity, for I hold that such co-operation was not worthy of the name. Therefore, so far as I am personally concerned, when proper time comes, I should throw the whole of my weight in favour of co-operation.

57 In an article entitled "Satyagraha, Civil Disobedience, Passive Resistance, Non-Cooperation", *Young India*, March 23, 1921, Gandhi pointed out that Civil Disobedience is more "fierce" than non-cooperation. Hence in the first instance it has to be practised only by a select few. But non-cooperation could be practised even by children of understanding and the masses.

58 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, pp. 214-15.

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 171-73.

down civil disobedience was tantamount to the imprisonment of conscience. Gandhi, thus, made explicit in political philosophy the critical instrument of human conscience.

Gandhi also distinguishes between different types of civil disobedience :—

(a) *Aggressive or Assertive or Offensive Civil Disobedience.* It refers to disregard of laws relating to revenue or regulation of personal conduct for the convenience of the state, although such laws in themselves inflict no hardship and do not require to be altered.

(b) *Defensive Civil Disobedience.* Its examples are :—

- (i) formation of volunteer corps for peaceful purposes,
- (ii) holding of public meetings,
- (iii) publication of articles not contemplating or inciting to violence in spite of prohibition orders, and
- (iv) peaceful picketing.

Gandhi further says that aggressive, assertive or wilful civil disobedience is non-violent wilful disobedience of state laws for symbolic purposes. Obedience of such laws may not involve any moral turpitude but, nevertheless, disobedience is taken recourse to as a matter of challenging the power of the state. Defensive civil obedience, on the other hand, is involuntary and reluctant, and it involves disobeying those laws, obedience to which, would imply a compromise with one's moral dignity or self-respect. The differences can be thus represented.<sup>60</sup>

<i>Aggressive or Assertive or Offensive Civil Disobedience</i>	<i>Defensive Civil Disobedience</i>
(a) Is a symbol of revolt against the state.	(a) Is undertaken to vindicate one's self-respect or human dignity.
(b) Involves wilful disobedience.	(b) Is involuntary or reluctant.
(c) Refers to laws which may not require to be altered.	(c) Refers to laws which are themselves bad.

There can be individual as well as mass civil disobedience. The latter means intensive spontaneous action by the masses. Certainly, in the beginning, the masses will have to be rigorously trained for action and gradually they will learn this art. There are two differences between mass civil disobedience and individual civil disobedience. First, mass civil disobedience can be tried only in a calm atmosphere. For individual civil disobedience the atmosphere is always there except when there are chances of bloodshed. But, in case a Satyagrahi receives a call from God, then even the risk of bloodshed may not be taken into consideration. Secondly, mass civil

disobedience may be, and often is, selfish, e.g., the movement of South African Satyagraha. But individual civil disobedience may be, and often is, vicarious, e.g., the individual civil disobedience offered by Hermann Kallenbach (1871-1945) and H. S. L. Polak (1882-1958?) in South Africa.

According to Gandhi, complete civil disobedience implying a refusal to render obedience to every single state-made law can be a very powerful movement.<sup>61</sup> It could become "more dangerous than an armed rebellion,"<sup>62</sup> because the stupendous power of innocent suffering undergone on an organized mass scale has, certainly, great potency. No state has the right to make laws which run counter to the will and aspirations of the people. Hence there is the necessity for Satyagraha in the form of civil disobedience if morally unjustified laws are imposed on citizens.

Gandhi also makes a distinction between violent and non-violent civil disobedience. Violent disobedience deals with *men* who can be replaced. In this case, the evil is left untouched and is often accentuated. On the other hand, non-violent or civil disobedience is the only effective remedy and is obligatory upon him who would dissociate himself from evil.

By bringing the scrutinizing glare of public opinion on the evils of an autocratic state, through voluntary suffering, the fall even of tyrannical political regimes is ensured. Satyagraha, thus, also becomes a process of educating public opinion through the acceptance of the penalties imposed by the state, and in the end, when all sections of society become convinced of the justice of the cause, victory is definitely assured. There is nothing like defeat in the dictionary of Satyagraha. What apparently looks like defeat is only an occasion for additional preparation. In the process of the struggle for Indian independence, it appeared in 1922-1924 and again in 1933-1934 that the Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements had failed.<sup>63</sup>

61 M. K. Gandhi, "Civil Disobedience", *Young India*, August 4, 1921 : "Complete civil disobedience is a state of peaceful rebellion—a refusal to obey every single State-made law. It is certainly more dangerous than an armed rebellion. For it can never be put down if the civil resisters are prepared to face extreme hardships. It is based upon an implicit belief in the absolute efficiency of innocent suffering. By noiselessly going to prison, a civil resister ensures a calm atmosphere. The wrong-doer wearies of wrong-doing in the absence of resistance. All pleasure is lost when the victim betrays no resistance. A full grasp of the conditions of successful civil resistance is necessary at least on the part of the representatives of the people before we can launch out on an enterprise of such magnitude."

62 M. K. Gandhi, "Civil Disobedience", *Young India*, August 4, 1921.

63 Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 336, points out that a direct action mass non-violent struggle cannot remain at a revolutionary pitch for a long time. Nor can it be static. Ups and downs are inevitable. "Civil disobedience, after the first flush, went down slowly, but it could carry on at a lower level for long periods."

But Gandhi as the true Satyagrahi was undaunted and ultimately his optimism was vindicated in 1947.

(8) *Peace Brigade*. For the resolution of common conflicts, Gandhi recommended the formation of a Peace Brigade in the thirties. Non-cooperation with the constituted political superior and civil disobedience of the laws and decrees of the determinate sovereign are spectacular examples of Satyagraha at the *political level*. But the members of the Peace Brigade apply the basic principles and techniques of Satyagraha at the less dramatic, but no less significant, *social level*. The idea is that the Peace Brigade should act as a substitute for the police and military, and its members should immolate themselves at the altar of communal frenzy and mob violence. Hence Gandhi recommended the formation of a non-violent army of volunteers consisting of lacs of persons. He laid down certain spiritual, moral and social criteria for the peace brigade. (a) The members were to have firm faith in the compassion and majesty of God, otherwise they would not have the requisite fearlessness and self-sacrifice. They were to have equal regard for all religions of the world. They should be men of unimpeachable character. (b) Generally, local men were to be the members of the units of the peace brigade, because they would have won the confidence of the populace by their service. They must be prepared to take action to counteract all communal violence. (c) For the sake of discipline and organization it would be better if these people wear a distinctive dress.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, Gandhi believed in the possibility of having a non-violent army of those citizens who honestly endeavour to observe the canons of non-violence in their lives. This army was to act as a counterpoise to all kinds of riots, disturbances and anti-social activities, and had to be ready to cope with any "emergency".<sup>65</sup> In 1940, Gandhi wanted Congress-men to defend their country with a non-violent army.<sup>66</sup>

##### **5. Conditions for the Success of Satyagraha**

Satyagraha is not a movement of bluster of bluff, but demands solid, sincere and silent self-sacrifice, steady discipline and firm purposefulness. Hence Gandhi laid down strict canons of moral discipline for the Satyagrahi.<sup>67</sup> Faith in the omnipotence and kindness of God is the prime essential requisite for the Satyagrahi, because it alone imparts to him immense strength even in the face of great concentrations of earthly power. Without an unshakeable faith in God, he will not be able to bear calmly the physical atrocities perpetrated on his person by authorities with superior force of violence at their command. He has to remain firm and unmoved trusting in the holy

64 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-90.

65 *Harijan*, March 26, 1938.

66 *Harijan*, July 13, 1940.

67 M. K. Gandhi, "Who Can Offer Satyagaha", *Collected Works*, Vol. IX, pp. 224-27.

and superior wisdom of God. Hence Gandhi declared : "The only weapon of the Satyagrahi is God." Only a living faith in God as the unsailing protector makes one fearless. William Penn also had said : "Men must either be governed by God or they must be ruled by tyrants."

The Satyagrahi should strengthen his body by physical exercise like *Hathayoga*.<sup>68</sup> He should practice *Brahmacharya* and should be absolutely fearless and firm in his resolve. His purity of life should be so deep as to compel reverence even from the opponents. Furthermore, he must have patience and single-minded determination and must not be swayed from the path of duty by anger or any other passion. He is not to harbour any hatred in his heart against the opponent because, in the long run, hatred is a waste of energy and is also a moral wrong. *Satyagraha* can never be resorted to for personal gains. It is a "love process" and the appeal is always to the heart and not to the sense of fear of the wrong-doer. Love is the basic sword of the Satyagrahi. Instead of killing the hooligans that confront him, he would prefer to die at their hands and thereby live.

The Gandhian stress on personal purity as a criterion of political influence is a contribution to political thought. Plato also prescribed physical, mathematical and dialectical training for the philosopher-guardians of his perfect state as outlined in the *Republic*, but Gandhi goes beyond Plato in stressing *Brahmacharya*. It is, of course, true, that Gandhi does not put any emphasis on rigorous intellectual training in the mathematical science and philosophy as Plato does. He would be satisfied with a study of the *Bhagavadgita* and the *Ramacharitamanas* of Tulsidas so far as educational training of the Satyagrahi is concerned because *Satyagraha* does not require much scholastic learning. But it does require the stout heart that comes from suffering and faith. The Satyagrahi must be prepared to undergo all kinds of humiliations, persecutions and sufferings. In the end, he must be ready to lay down his life. Hence *Satyagraha* can be practised only by the stout in heart.<sup>69</sup>

These essence of *Satyagraha* is the dynamisation of the concealed potency of what the ancient Rishis have called *Tapasya* and *Sadhana*. Gandhi used to repeat the celebrated answers of Rama to Vibhishana when the latter was utterly perturbed at the prospect of a battle between the poorly equipped Rama and the mighty king and warrior Ravana. Tulsidasa has, thus, categorized the answers supposed to have been given by Rama. Rama says :

68 Gandhi referred to *Hathayoga* exercises as the "ancient type of non-violent training." They were meant for individual purification and strengthening the body.

69 It cannot be imagined that the "Christian" conscience of British imperial rulers made them follow a soft or moderate policy towards the *Satyagrahis*. In 1932-33 and in 1942-43, the brutalities perpetrated by the British were really very shocking.

"The chariot, my dear Vibhishana, that wins the victory for Rama is of a different sort from the usual one". Manliness and courage are its wheels : unflinching truth and character (*Sila*) its banners and standards ; strength, discrimination, self-restraint and benevolence its horses, with forgiveness, mercy, equanimity (*Samata*) their reins ; prayer to God is that conqueror's unerring charioteer, dispassion his shield, contentment his sword, charity his axe, intellect his spear, and perfect science (*Vara vijnana*) his stout bow. His pure and unwavering mind stands for a quiver, his mental quietude and his practice of *yama* and *niyama* stand for the sheaf of arrows (*Shilimukha*), and the homage he pays to Brahmins and his guru is his impenetrable armour. There is no other equipment for victory comparable to this ; and, my dear friend, there is no enemy who can conquer the man who takes his stand on the chariot of dharma. He who has a powerful chariot like this is a warrior who can conquer even that great and invincible enemy—the world. Hearken unto me and fear not."<sup>70</sup>

The qualities and attributes which Rama advocates for a valient conqueror were interpreted by Gandhi to summarize the moral foundations required in a Satyagraha movement.

The Satyagrahi must not hanker after wealth and fame. He must obey the leader of the Satyagraha unit.<sup>71</sup> The stress on obedience to the leader<sup>72</sup> does not show the dictatorial temper of Gandhi but is only the formulation of the plain truth that no concerted effort is possible without some form of discipline and guidance. The Satyagrahi leader should have an exemplary moral character and should be guided by the dictates of the inner voice amidst the tumult of confusing opinions and dissentient advice. He cannot afford to be swayed by the opinion of the masses. Gandhi wrote :

70 *Harjan*, August 25, 1940.

71 In an article entitled "Discipline—Satyagrahi and Military", in the *Harjan*, June 10, 1939, it is maintained that Gandhi would be prepared to reason and argue with the Satyagrahi soldiers, "but where you cannot follow you will have to have faith. In ordinary warfare a soldier cannot reason why .... You will go on arguing until you are convinced, but when no conviction comes, you must fall back on faith."

72 A Satyagraha movement, like any other social or political movement, would require leadership. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 234, did recognize the tremendous significance of subjective factors of character behind leadership when he wrote: "The history of the world is full of instances of men who rose to leadership by sheer force of self-confidence, bravery and tenacity." But he also, like the Marxists, adhered to the theory that the needs of the time produce the leaders. He wrote, *Satyagraha*, p. 225, "Mass movements have, all over the world thrown up unexpected leaders." ".....I have sufficient faith in the co-workers and in the mission itself to know that circumstances will give the successor."—(*Ibid.*, p. 233).

"Those who claim to lead the masses must resolutely refuse to be led by them, if we want to avoid mob law and desire ordered progress for the country. I believe that mere protestation of one's opinion and surrender to the mass opinion is not only not enough, but in matters of vital importance, leaders must *act* contrary to the mass opinion if it does not commend itself to their reason."<sup>73</sup>

The leader must have, furthermore, realistic evaluation of the social, political and environmental situation. Just as in the case of armed conflicts the leader has to take the initiative and make firm decisions regarding the times of attack, retreat and withdrawal, so also the Satyagrahi leader should plan his strategy. Thus it is clear that the Satyagrahi leader has not only to be a man of resolute moral fervour and religious attainment but has also to be a person of realistic vision who can dispassionately assess the fighting strength of his own followers and the hitting capacity of the adversary.

According to Gandhi, Satyagraha, to be effective, also requires certain sociological conditions besides the psychological ones. The issues for which Satyagraha is launched should be a true and substantial one. In all the Satyagraha campaigns launched by Gandhi—in South Africa, in Viramgam (1915), in Champaran (1917), in Ahmedabad, in Kheda, against the Rowlatt Act (1919), and the Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements in India—the case was always legitimate and just.

Compromise is an essential part of Satyagraha. Gandhi had a love for compromise although in his personal life he was rather puritanical. Compromise is based on two assumptions. First, it shows the spirit of meekness and gentleness of the Satyagrahi. Secondly, it shows that the opponents have at least partly come down. They should be given opportunities to see the justice of the case at issue. During his leadership of the South African Satyagraha and Indian Independence struggle, Gandhi several times entered into a compromise with the adversary and, thus, provided opportunities to the extremists for ridiculing him. But he absolutely stuck to what he considered to be the demand of the practice of truth in a specific situation. In spite of facing some ridicule and criticism from his colleagues, Gandhi suspended the Satyagraha campaign in 1922 and 1934. In 1931, he entered into the Gandhi-Irwin Pact although all his terms were not agreed to by the then Governor-General of India.

Gandhi, thus summarized some of the important conditions and rules for the Satyagrahi :

- “(i) A Satyagrahi, i. e., a civil resister will harbour no anger.
- (ii) He will suffer the anger of the opponent.
- (iii) In so doing he will put up with assaults from the opponent, never retaliate ; but he will not submit, out of fear of punishment or the like, to any order given in anger.
- (iv) When any person in authority seeks to arrest a civil resister, he will voluntarily submit to the arrest, and he will not resist the attachment or removal of his own property, if any, when it is sought to be confiscated by the authorities.
- (v) If a civil resister has any property in his possession as a trustee, he will refuse to surrender it, even though in defending it he might lose his life. He will, however, never retaliate.
- (vi) Non-retaliation excludes swearing and cursing.
- (vii) Therefore a civil resister will never insult his opponent, and therefore also not take part in many of the newly coined cries which are contrary to the spirit of *Ahimsa*.<sup>74</sup>

## 6. Critique of Satyagraha

Gandhi was always emphatic upon the persuasive character of non-violent Satyagraha. He denied the presence of even any mental violence or coercion in it. His claim was that it was the energisation of love and moral strength and proceeded from the compassionate desire to apply the ethic of brotherly feeling to the adversary. He stressed its spiritual nature and regarded action based on *Ahimsa* to be always superior to action based on violence. But I think that an element of subtle coercion is present in some forms of non-violent Satyagraha. The British Government released Gandhi when he undertook fast in Jail in 1933, because it did not want to incur the shame of his death in prison. Furthermore, it did not want to risk the certain release of mass fury in case Gandhi died fasting. This dread of mass fury, to the extent that it operated as a theme of anticipated calculation in the mind of the British policy-makers, would indicate the subtle, but, nonetheless, powerful coercion implicit in some of the technics of Satyagraha.<sup>75</sup>

74 *Young India*, February 27, 1930. Gandhi categorically stated that even if there was one true Satyagrahi that would be enough. He was trying to be that Satyagrahi. But that required complete control over one's lower passions. Not one of the thoughts of such a Satyagrahi would be vain.

75 Once when it was pointed out to Gandhi that fasting contained an element of coercion, he said : “Yes, the same kind of coercion which Jesus exercises upon you from the cross.” In defending the character of fasting as a social technic, E. Stanley Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 149, says that it involves only “redemptive coercion.” Jawaharlal Nehru, “A Visit to Gandhiji”, *Autobiography*, p. 403, however, does recognize that the Gandhian technics of conversion “are not far removed, to my thinking, from courteous and considerate compulsion.”

It must also be confessed that the large number of hunger strikes in independent India, undertaken upon the flimsiest issues, revealingly point out the deadly coercion implicit in fasting as a social and political technic.<sup>76</sup> It is true that these hunger strikes are "imitation brand" and not the genuine Gandhian stuff, but in their grim exaggerated perversity they only point out in blazing terms an element which is immanent even in the true Satyagraha.

For the success of Satyagraha it is essential to mobilise the force of public opinion. It is of great concern that the public are convinced of the genuineness of the cause. Hence it is that Gandhi always emphasised the necessity of self-suffering. Suffering does convince both the adversary and the people at large. But a dispassionate perusal of history points out that often organised violent brutality has broken the nerves of people. More than fifty lacs (5 million) of Jews were butchered in complete defiance of all laws of sanity and decency. But this creation of a river of human blood did not bring about any conversion of the Nazis. Gandhi would argue that the Jews were not Satyagrahis and they harboured vengeance and anger against their opponents. But regardless of the psychological presence of love or hatred in the hearts of Jews the devastation and annihilations perpetrated by the Nazis were examples of terrible mass suffering. But no tangible good consequence came out of that. Furthermore, a realistic student of politics cannot fail noting that public opinion could become effective in India because the British rulers were surrounded by a vast sea of Indian population. After all, numerical strength is also a force of tremendous importance. In South Africa, the Indians, being in minority, could not effectuate that much of success as in India. Thus whether Satyagraha attains success or not depends on a number of favourable social and political factors. Hence I feel sceptical of the wonderful potency attributed to suffering by Gandhi.

## 7. Satyagraha and Democracy

Never, according to Gandhi, is Satyagraha for the sake of truth and justice, to be given up. But Satyagraha, although based on moral resistance to unjustified authority is also never to become a formula of social and political disintegration. A Satyagrahi must have first rendered intelligent, spontaneous and willing obedience to the laws of the state.<sup>77</sup> Gandhi writes :

"A Satyagrahi obeys the laws of society intelligently and of his own free will, because he considers it to be his sacred duty to do so. It is only when a person has thus obeyed the laws of society scrupulously that he is in a position to judge as to which particular rules are good and just and which unjust and

76 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, *op. cit.*, pp. 320-21, has drawn a firm distinction between Satyagraha fasts and hunger strikes.

77 M. K. Gandhi, "A Himalayan Miscalculation", *Autobiography*, Part V, Chapter 33.

iniquitous. Only then does the right accrue to him of the civil disobedience of certain laws in well-defined circumstances.”<sup>78</sup>

Certainly, the Satyagrahi obeys the laws of the state not because of the fear of penal sanctions but because he regards them as promoting the common good. Gandhi himself claimed to have been, by nature, law-abiding and stated that the capacity for civil resistance comes from the discipline undergone in process of obeying the civil and moral laws of the state.

“Democracy comes naturally to him who is habituated normally to yield willing obedience to all laws, human or divine. I claim to be a democrat both by instinct and training. Let those who are ambitious to serve democracy qualify themselves by satisfying first this acid test of democracy.”<sup>79</sup>

But Gandhi was also a believer in the categorical superiority of loyalty to the commands of conscience to man-made law. He would, hence, never sanction the submission to any law if it conflicted with the moral stature of a man. The voice of the *Atman*—the inner conscience, was the “higher law” and was supreme. Thus, Gandhi stresses the overwhelming significance of individual conscience. He said that if the commands of even his father were repugnant to his conscience he would resist them.<sup>80</sup> In the name of conscience, Gandhi would be thoroughly opposed to the coercive and authoritarian features of modern political systems which are very often dominated by organisation, violent co-ordination and even regimentation. The dictates and commands of any government, if they conflicted with the sense of higher loyalty to conscience, had to be resisted. Thus, according to the political teachings of Gandhi, Satyagraha is a perpetual law against anything repugnant to the soul. Even if alone, a man of truth and conscience will resist the laws and commands issued by a representative legislature if they go against the higher law of the *Atman*. Gandhi wrote : “Whether therefore I am in the minority of one or I have a majority, I must go along the course that God seems to have shown me.”<sup>81</sup> Hence it does not seem correct to say that Gandhi would absolutely ban Satyagraha in a democratic governmental set-up.<sup>82</sup>

Gandhi had no special faith in the sanctity of the mechanisms and institutions of democracy, although, for the present, he had accepted for India the pattern of parliamentary government based on adult suffrage. But, in terms of ideals, he would not accept the axiomatic superiority of the majority will expressed in a parliament

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Harjan*, May 27, 1939.

<sup>80</sup> M. K. Gandhi's evidence before the Hunter Committee.

<sup>81</sup> *Young India*, December 1, 1927.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. K. G. Mashruwala, *Gandhi-Vichara-Dohana*, (In Hindi), (Delhi, Sasta Sahitya Mandala, 1961), p. 70.

as Locke did. Gandhi always looked to the moral aspect of the matter and the basic point, according to him, was life in accordance with the canons of truth and not the subservience to the majority pronouncements. Several times it occurred in the course of Indian national history that Gandhi said that he would oppose any law or system even if he were in a minority of one because he was absolutely devoted to the principle that "Non-cooperation with evil is a sacred duty." Hence the ethics of Satyagraha is certainly never synonymous with the ethics of democracy because the latter is based on the arithmetical device of counting of numbers. Satyagraha, on the other hand, is independent of numbers participating in it.<sup>83</sup> A representative democratic assembly may be swayed by all types of passions, prejudices and petty considerations. But a devotee of truth would not tamely accept all this. He would not be content with merely trying to change the personnel of the legislatures after four or five years through a general election. He should certainly educate public opinion.<sup>84</sup>

"A Satyagrahi, for instance, must first mobilize public opinion<sup>85</sup> against the evil which he is out to eradicate, by means of a wide and intensive agitation. When public opinion is sufficiently roused against a social abuse even the tallest will not dare to practise or openly to lend support to it. An awakened and intelligent public opinion is the most potent weapon of a Satyagrahi."

But the attempts to create a favourable public opinion do not constitute the sole work of the Satyagrahi. He must be prepared to immolate himself for the cause of truth. A true Satyagrahi will risk all dangers for the sake of truth. Gandhi wrote as early as August, 1921 :

"But even so a call may come which one dare not neglect, cost it what it may. I can clearly see the time coming to me when I must refuse obedience to every single state-made law, even though there may be a certainty of bloodshed. When

83 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

84 M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, October 20, 1927, p. 353, lists the following three methods to be pursued before the launching of Satyagraha :

- (i) Constant and continual appeal to and approaching the constituted social and political authority.
  - (ii) Appeal to and education of public opinion.
  - (iii) Stating and explaining his case to all those who show interest in the case. During the South African Satyagraha, Gandhi attempted to solicit the sympathy of Tolstoy and the Maharaja of Baroda (*Collected Works*, Vols. VI & VII), in his Movement.
- 85 M.K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, *op. cit.*, p. 382 : "Satyagraha is a process of educating public opinion, such that it covers all the elements of society and in the end makes itself irresistible."

neglect of the call means a denial of God, civil disobedience becomes a peremptory duty.”<sup>86</sup>

Even in January 1930, before launching the Salt Satyagraha, he declared : “ . . . with the unquenchable faith I have in the method of civil resistance, I must not be deterred from the course the Inward Voice seems to be leading me to.”<sup>87</sup>

Thus Gandhi was categorical in his belief that he would resist the ordinances, laws and commands of the British imperial government in India, even alone. But the problems and the responses to them assume a different shape in the context of democracy where people have the electoral device at their command for implementing the desired social and political change.

The following evidence given by Mahatma Gandhi before the Hunter Committee in January, 1920, indicates, however, that he was categorical in his view that Satyagraha could be resorted to even in an India enjoying responsible self-government.

*Ques.* You can resort to no other remedy to oppose the irresponsible, foreign officials and that is why you have started this movement. Is it not ?

*Ans.* I cannot say that with certainty. I can conceive the necessity of Satyagraha in opposition to the would-be full responsible self-government. Our ministers can never claim to defend themselves on the score of their ignorance, whereas such a defence is available today for the English officers.

*Ques.* But with all the rights of self-government we shall be able to dismiss the ministers ?

*Ans.* I cannot feel on that point so assured for ever. In England it often happens that ministers can continue in the executive even though they lose all the confidence of the public. The same thing may happen here too and therefore I can imagine a state of things in this country which would need Satyagraha even under Home Rule.”<sup>88</sup>

There occurs an important sentence in Gandhi’s *Satyagraha in South Africa*, “Probably there would not have been any scope for Satyagraha if they had the franchise.”<sup>89</sup> It may be construed to imply that in a democratic system in South Africa for Indians, Gandhi might not have been very keen on his Satyagraha.

But although Gandhi might stand for the inalienable right of Satyagraha, on grounds of conscience, even in a responsible government, he would not advocate mass Satyagraha. He emphatically stated : “Total non-violent non-cooperation has no place in popular

86 *Young India*, August 4, 1921, p. 244.

87 *Young India*, January 23, 1930, p. 29.

88 *Young India*, February 4, 1920. Extracts in M.K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Press, 1951), pp. 33-34.

89 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, p. 113.

Raj, whatever its level may be.”<sup>90</sup> In a speech on August 29, 1947, also Gandhi pointed out that Satyagraha, civil disobedience and fasts had “restricted use in democracy”.<sup>91</sup>

It is true that in post-Gandhian India, the technic of Satyagraha has been much misused. Even historical materialists of the Marxian school who have no faith in God and who accept ethical relativism resort to Satyagraha and hunger strikes. Other anti-social forces begin hunger-strikes to get their selfish ends realized. But in spite of this patent vulgarization by self-seeking groups, the weapon of Satyagraha is a noble technic for the vindication of injured rights. Even in democratic politics there is some place for Satyagraha. One cannot say that an individual with a grievance should only go to the law courts or should try to change the composition of the legislature in order to get his point of view sponsored by a changed body of legislators. There may be executive decisions and even legislative and judicial pronouncements which may appear to an individual to transgress the canons of morality. He may feel that his conscience rebels against some laws, directions, policies or decisions. In such situations he cannot be asked to surrender his birthright of Satyagraha. If he does not take recourse to violent methods and if he is ready to suffer whatever penalties are imposed on him by the holders of authority, then I see no reason why an individual should be asked to surrender his right of Satyagraha for the vindication of his rights and freedom. Interpreted in this sense, Satyagraha remains a monumental contribution of Gandhi to the modern civilization. No polity is perfect and no government is committed completely to the common good. Democracies function on the basis of majority decisions and hence there may be innumerable occasions when people of the minority groups may feel thwarted at being denied their share of justice. Even judges are men of flesh and blood and they also are amenable to pressures and influences. They have their own biases and prejudices. They also are the utterance of contemporary social, economic and political groups to which they belong. Hence the mere creation of a democratic institutional framework does not imply that the kingdom of God has been realized on this earth. Keen students of the democratic process like Tocqueville, Frederick Engels, Ostrogorski, Bryce, Michels, A. F. Bentley, Laski, Herman Finer, Leonard White, V.O. Key, Harold Gosnell and others have pointed out numerous vital flaws of democracy. The serious damages to the working of democracy in the eastern countries are also object-lessons. Hence I regard it as defeatism and a policy of weak resignation to say that in a democratic system there is absolutely no place for Satyagraha. The essence of democracy is to prepare the institutional frame-work for the realization of individual rights and freedom and hence there is necessity for the technic of Satyagraha. But its corruption and vulgarization are certainly to be avoided.

<sup>90</sup> *Harijan*, July 14, 1946.

<sup>91</sup> Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, VII, p. 100.

# 13

## THE POLITICAL THEORY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

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### 1. Methodology of Gandhian Political Theory

From the methodological standpoint it can be said that Gandhi's approach to the formulation of political generalizations is both deductive and empirical. He *deduces* certain moral, social and political conclusions from his metaphysical assumptions. Because he believed in the universality of God, hence, he accepted the theory of human equality because, in spite of apparent divergences and disparities, all men are really one in their essential spirit. He was a thorough believer in metaphysical and ethical idealism and hence he accepted the sanctity of moral technics in politics. From his conception of the absolutely binding character of loyalty to Truth, followed his theory of Satyagraha or resistance to untruth, injustice and tyranny. Thus, it is clear that he follows the deductive methodology.

But Gandhi's approach is also empirical because a considerable number of the political and social propositions are based upon his own observations and experiences.<sup>1</sup> His stress on the removal of untouchability, his plea for communal concord and his emphasis on rural rehabilitation and reconstruction are grounded upon the pragmatic lessons derived from his experiences as a social and political leader. The richness of personal experiences gained in social and political activities of fifty-five years (1893-1948) was Gandhi's strong point. It must be pointed out, however, that there is slender use of the historical method in Gandhi's political philosophy. He did not use historical materials for the construction of his ideas, although, sometimes he did refer to the examples of historical figures to corroborate some of his own statements. Although a trained barister and successful lawyer, Gandhi was no exponent of the juristic approach to politics. Furthermore, there is no place for the

Both Rousseau and Gandhi exalt the significance of personal experience. With regard to Rousseau, Harold Laski, "A Portrait of Rousseau" *The Dangers of Obedience*, says : Rousseau, "erected his personal experience into an argument".—"He exalted his experience until, for him and for his readers, it had the impelling claim of religious ecstasy."

application of the more sophisticated, quantitative and behavioural methods and models of politics and politico-metrics in the writings of Gandhi.

Gandhi adopts a religious and moral approach to politics. Hence he would have disfavoured the modern stress on the study merely of the processes, procedures and dynamics of political phenomena. There is no distinct department called "political". It is only a phase and aspect of life. Because life is a concrete organic unity, hence, all its actual phases, sectors and dimensions have to be made perceptible to the mind in their interconnectedness. This philosophical conception of the comprehension of the whole of human life provides the rational justification of Gandhi's stress on the realization of freedom at all levels—personal, political, economic and moral. According to him, political action and moral self-determination should be synthesized. The problems of economics, sociology and political science have to be studied in the context of life itself. The purified will is to be the source of all kinds of action—social, political and moral. He refuses to accept the absolute separation of the secular and the sacred. Even to the secular, there is to be a religious orientation. But in the context of Gandhi's 'Ethical Religion' this orientation only implies the necessity of moral approach and is thoroughly removed from supernaturalism and theocracy. This comprehensive philosophical and moral orientation of Gandhi is found in his analysis of the dominant concepts of political theory, *viz.*, liberty, rights, state, democracy, etc.

## 2. Theory of Rights

(a) *Civil and Political Rights.* Gandhi stated that rights are claims to serve the commands of God. He was also a strong political individualist believing in the equal rights of man.

He had a keen sense of personal rights. He claimed to be a "born democrat" and had a passionate desire for the reign of right in the world. From his earliest years, almost instinctively, he accepted human equality. Hence in his political career he always stressed the rights of man. Soon after his return from England, when the Political Agent of Kathiawad insulted him, he wanted to "proceed against" him judicially and could be restrained only by the advice of Pherozeshah Mehta. That was "the first shock" of his life. When in June, 1893, he was "pushed" out of the first class railway compartment by a constable by the order of a railway official at Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, he, seated in a waiting-room, began to think of his duty—Should I fight for my *rights*" or go back to India. . . It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation."<sup>2</sup> The entire life and activities of Gandhi were a revelation of his fighting spirit in quest of justice, truth and right.

2 M. K. Gandhi, "On the Way to Pretoria," *Autobiography*, p. 81. (Our *Italics*)

In quest of the rights of man, he was struggling against all illegitimate and unjustified social traditions, irrational political conventions, colour prejudices and other barbaric customs and privileges. He was opposed to the ravages of imperialism and foreign exploitation because they compromised the dignity and rights of man. In his actual life and his writings one finds revealed the agony and torment of his heart whenever he had to meet a situation that thwarted and crushed the individual and denied him his rights.

One of the prime themes in Gandhi's political philosophy is the conception of right because the entire theory of Satyagraha is based on the notion of the individual's inalienable right to resist a coercive social and political system. Against the claims of state omnicompetence, Gandhi puts up the right of the internality of judgment. His belief in the holiness and sanctity of the inner voice was only a religious way of registering his fidelity to the right of individual conscience to resist despotic power. By his advocacy of the superior binding character of the commands of inner conscience, he has rendered a great service to the appreciation of the concepts of right in the modern world. He regarded the restoration of the rights of the dispossessed as the indispensable condition for the establishment of justice and peace in the world. Without the exercise of legitimate rights, the individual cannot attain the realization of moral personality. Hence the conception of unconditional obedience to the determinate political or legal superior could have absolutely no place in Gandhi's thought because the individual has, according to him, a moral right to oppose a law, command, decree or direction that goes against either divine laws or against the canons of conscience. Gandhi, hence, would thoroughly and categorically repudiate the divine right of kings to rule.

Gandhi's advocacy of right was revealed in the famous Satyagraha in South Africa from September 11, 1906 to January, 1914. He wanted the recognition of the right to equality of the Asiatic races in South Africa. The issues that were involved there referred mostly to civil rights. (i) The first demand of the Indian community was the abolition of the annual tax of three pounds imposed in 1894 on the indentured Indian labourers who desired to settle in the province of Natal at the end of their covenanted term of service. The original plan of the Whites in Natal was to impose an annual tax of £25 per head. But it was reduced to £3. Gandhi considered this £3 tax as "inhuman" and atrocious.<sup>3</sup> (ii) The second demand was the civil right to unrestricted freedom of movement in the Union territories. (iii) The third demand concerned the legal legitimization and validation of all non-Christian marriages whose moral and legally binding character was being threatened by a judicial decision of the Cape Colony. The decision of Justice Searle of the Cape

3 M. K. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, p. 113.

Supreme Court delivered on March 4, 1913, invalidated all non-Christian marriages. The Government refused to accede to Gandhi's request for getting either this decision negatived or the law, interpreted by the judge, amended. The other demands were (iv) with regard to the removal of the anti-Asiatic bias in the immigration policy of the Union Government<sup>4</sup>, and (v) an assurance that the existing laws affecting Indians would be justly administered with due consideration of vested rights wheresoever existing.<sup>5</sup> Thus the basic demands of the Indian community did not primarily refer so much to the political right of participation in the institutional and administrative mechanism of the government as to the civil and personal rights of the citizen.<sup>6</sup>

As a man of the people, Gandhi stood for the civil rights of the lowliest and the humblest. Against the prerogatives of racial ascendancy, he advocated the right to equality of all residents of the country. He was never convinced of the glories of racial imperialism. Hence, even when he believed in the benefits of British rule, he valiantly fought the unfounded dogma of the supremacy of the white

4 For example, the Asiatic Registration Act passed on March 21, 1907 (called by Gandhi "The Black Act").

5 M.K. Gandhi's letter to General Smuts dated January 21, 1914—Chap. XLIX, *Satyagraha in South Africa*.

6 In replying to a letter by Smuts, Gandhi pointed out : "As you are aware, some of my countrymen have wished me to go further. They are dissatisfied that the Trade Licence laws of the different provinces, the Transvaal Gold Law, the Transvaal Townships Act, the Transvaal Law 3 of 1885, have not been altered so as to give them full rights of residence, trade and ownership of land. Some of them are dissatisfied that full inter-provincial migration is not permitted, and some are dissatisfied that on the marriage question the Relief Bill goes no further than it does. They have asked me that all the above matters might be included in the Satyagraha struggle. I have been unable to comply with their wishes. Whilst, therefore, they have not been included in the programme of Satyagraha, it will not be denied that some day or the other these matters will require further and sympathetic consideration by the Government. Complete satisfaction cannot be expected until full civil rights have been conceded to the resident Indian population. I have told my countrymen that they will have to exercise patience, and by all honourable means at their disposal educate public opinion so as to enable the Government of the day to go further than the present correspondence does. I shall hope when the Europeans of South Africa fully appreciate the fact that now the importation of indentured labour from India is prohibited, and the Immigrants Regulation Act of last year has in practice all but stopped further free Indian immigration and that my countrymen do not entertain any political ambition, they, the Europeans, will see the justice and indeed the necessity of my countrymen being granted the rights I have just referred to." Gandhi was referring to the "full rights of residence, trade and ownership" by the alteration of the Trade License laws, the Transvaal Gold Law, the Transvaal Township Act, and the Transvaal Law 3 of 1885. The demand for political right was, however, not absent. In the Petition presented to the Natal Assembly in June, 1894, the political "right to the franchise in Natal" was demanded. See also M. K. Gandhi, "Settled in Natal", *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 334, for references to "political rights", "trading rights" and "right to franchise".

man in Africa. But although in South Africa, Gandhi launched Satyagraha for the vindication of the civil rights of Indians, he was opposed to the latter claiming any superiority to the Negro peoples.

Gandhi was meek, humble and compromising but he could not tolerate any attack on the political rights of Indians. While his leadership of the Satyagraha in South Africa was based on his fearless advocacy of the cause of civil rights, the Indian theatre witnessed an extension of his activities in quest of political rights. In India, he had to fight the unchallenged sway of an arrogant imperialism. He gave, hence, the slogan of non-cooperation in 1920 which became the prelude to the defiant war-slogan of "Quit India". With eminent courage and devotion he fought for India's political rights. His leadership of the movement of Indian nationalist independence from 1920 to 1947 was a momentous struggle for the assertion of the political right of Swaraj.

In one of his early speeches in Madras, he advocated "the right to rebel" as the indefeasible right of a British citizen. In 1920, he interpreted political right as equivalent to the acquisition of Swaraj. In his famous Trial Speech of 1922, Gandhi condemned the Rowlatt Act of 1919 as designed to rob the people of all real freedom although its declared purpose was only to suppress sedition. He said that the Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code under which he was being tried was designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen. His emphasis upon the right of freedom of political expression is also brought out in this speech. He says : "Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. If one has no affection for a person or system, one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection so long as he does not contemplate, promote or incite to violence." In 1928, Gandhi was content with dominion status provided it was granted within one year. But in 1929 he blessed the Congress proposal for *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence.

For the realization of political right, it was essential to cultivate an indomitable will. "If we develop the force of will we shall find that we do not need the force of arms."<sup>7</sup>

As an outspoken champion of civil rights,<sup>8</sup> Gandhi, at least indirectly, attempted to get a legal and social recognition of the worth of man as a moral being. Thus Gandhi interpreted the conception of civil right as being vitally connected with the moral conception of the personality of man. Kant confessed that Rousseau had made him aware of the meaningfulness of the feelings and sensibilities of the common man. Similarly, it can be justifiably said about Gandhi that the conception of the rights of the plain forgotten Indian peasant assumed a concrete shape through his efforts. He fought in order

7 *Young India*, May 29, 1924.

8 In 1946, Gandhi exhorted the inhabitants of Goa to "assert their fundamental right of civil liberty.—"Harijan, June 30, 1946. (Our Italics)

that the distressed and disinherited people could become "apostle of life-giving freedom" and could hold aloft the brilliant torch of individual rights.

(b) *Rights and Duties.* One of the greatest champions of the rights of the exploited and humiliated individuals, groups and nations in modern times, Gandhi also stressed the correlation between rights and obligations. Hence if he repudiated the divine right of kings to rule, he also spoke against "the unabashed assertion of rights of the hitherto down-trodden millions" as being equally injurious.<sup>9</sup> He stressed the acquisition of those faculties, powers and ethical qualities which are necessary for the realization of rights as genuine claims. Moral training is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of rights. In order that a man could get genuine recognition of his rights, his actions had to be oriented to the constant practice of moral norms of life. If the moral preparation was wanting, then rights could be only fetters and impediments. Thus Gandhi had an axiological or valuational conception of rights because he affirmed that without the acceptance of altruistic aims and goals and without the effective ordering of life and its conduct by moral values, a man's existence would become empty and devoid of spiritual meaning. It was essential, hence, to integrate the rights of a person with a system of moral ends and altruistic purposes. Without this integration there was bound to result social disruption. Hence Gandhi puts the greatest stress on the conformity of conduct to the *Vratas* or eleven sacred vows. Of paramount importance, hence, in his teachings is the notion of the performance of duties or *Svadharma*.

If rights are correlated with duties in this higher sense of obligation to the eleven vows or *Mahavratas*, then the other popular postulate of duty that the rights of A require that B and C have the duty of letting A act unhindered in the sphere of his (A's) rights becomes only an elementary conception of civics.

In 1939, he wrote : "I value individual freedom but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being."<sup>10</sup> Hence he wanted a reconciliation of individual rights with the requirements of social progress. Individual rights and social restraints had both to be adjusted. An individual is a participant in the social process and hence he cannot be allowed to engage in the manifestation of unrestricted individualism. If the society has to be prevented from being a lawless jungle, the individual has to learn to make willing submission to the social and moral laws. Gandhi would have said that true rights do not follow from mere legal recognition but from moral advancement and social service. Effective self-devotion to the development of one's character and dedication to the service of others are the true sources of rights. It is preposterous to demand the

<sup>9</sup> *Harijan*, July 6, 1947.

<sup>10</sup> *Harijan*, May 27, 1939.

right to do as one likes. A right must be aimed at the liberation of man's faculties to enhance the good of all—Sarvodaya. A parent could demand legitimate obedience from his children only if he performed his duties to them. Rights not flowing from duties well-performed are mere "usurpations"<sup>11</sup> in his terminology. He pleaded for the adjustment of individualism based on rights with the performance of duties for social progress.<sup>12</sup> He thus wanted harmonious reconciliation between individual freedom and social duties, discipline and order. By the willing discharge and execution of social and political duties, man learns the meaning and value of his obligations to his group, his neighbourhood, the community and the state.<sup>13</sup>

For the stabilization of the democratic commonwealth, Gandhi felt that it was essential to discharge one's duties to the community and to the state. His stress on strict adherence to one's proper duties also to the government reminds one of Socrate's views in the *Crito*. Gandhi said that so long as one enjoyed the amenities, facilities, security and privileges provided by the government constituted according to law, it was one's duty to help the government. The clamour for the assertion of rights without the corresponding adherence to duties is an anomaly of modern times. Hence Gandhi's contribution to the philosophy of rights lies in his stress upon the realization of common public good and universal welfare<sup>14</sup> through the voluntary performance of one's duties to the community, the government and the state.

In a cable to H. G. Wells in reply to his on the Rights of Man, Gandhi had written :

"Received your cable. Have carefully read your five articles. You will permit me to say you are on the wrong track. I feel sure that I can draw up a better charter of rights than you have drawn up. But what good will it be? Who will become its guardian? If you mean propaganda or popular education, you have begun at the wrong end. I suggest the right way. Begin with a charter of Duties of Man, and I promise the rights will follow as spring follows winter. I write from experience. As a young man I began life by seeking to assert my rights, and I soon discovered I had none—not even over my wife. So I began by discovering and performing my duty by my wife, my children, friends, companions and society, and I find today that I have greater rights, perhaps, than any living man I know. If this is too

11 *Harijan*, July 7, 1947.

12 Cf. T. H. Green, William Wallace and L. T. Hobhouse.

13 Cf. B. Bosanquet, *A Philosophical Theory of State*.

14 *Young India*, January 29, 1925.

tall a claim, then I say I do not know anyone who possesses greater rights than I.”<sup>15</sup>

He wrote in a similar spirit to Julian Huxley. Gandhi thus advocates a teleological conception of rights.

But he had a comprehensive conception of the rights and duties of man. His philosophy of rights represents a synthesis of the individualistic and the teleological conceptions of rights. If on one side, like Jefferson and Thomas Paine, he advocated the rights of man, simultaneously, like Mazzini,<sup>16</sup> he put equal stress on the duties of man. Like the British idealists Green, Wallace and Bosanquet, he felt that only by serving the common good could any demand for rights receive its justification and validation. Like the philosophical idealists, he stresses duties in the sense of the moulding and governance of life by moral laws. But he does not teach social compliance and acquiescence or complete political subordination as Hegel and Bosanquet do. It is the duty of the individual, according to him, and not only his right to raise his voice if there is corruption and degeneration in society and in the state. Gandhi's conception of political Swaraj is, definitely, based on the individualistic theory of inalienable rights because he is an advocate of resistance to unjustified social and political authority. He would have repudiated the Hobbesian conception that all laws proceeding from the sovereign are just. Instead, he stood for the doctrine of Satyagraha against injustice. But for being a true Satyagrahi, one has to obtain the requisite discipline through the willing performance of duties essential for social good and through the adherence to moral norms. Thus along with the teleological approach of the idealists, Gandhi sponsors also an individualistic standpoint.

### 3. Theory of Freedom

In one of his earlier writings, Gandhi defines liberty as the power to act according to one's conscience. Slavery, hence, is tantamount to renunciation of one's will and acting in conformity to the dictates of the government. Since liberty is the ability to act in accordance with the voice of conscience, hence it can be preserved only by soul-force and not by the force of arms.<sup>17</sup>

In Gandhi, we find a comprehensive concept of freedom. The integral conception of the political, economic and moral freedom of man proceeded from his deep spiritual humanism. He claimed that his conception of freedom signified “the freedom of man in all his majesty”<sup>18</sup> because man is a soul. To Gandhi, hence, freedom is a

<sup>15</sup> *Harijan*, October 3, 1940.

<sup>16</sup> Gandhi was reading Mazzini and Emerson in 1909.—*Collected Works*, IX, p. 208.

<sup>17</sup> M. K. Gandhi, “Liberty”, *Indian Opinion*, *Collected Works*, Vol. X, p. 121.

<sup>18</sup> *Harijan*, June 7, 1942.

whole.”<sup>19</sup> National freedom as emancipation from the bondage of alien rulers and exploiters, moral freedom as emancipation from the slavery to passions, and spiritual freedom as emancipation from subservience to the demands of physical nature and the realization of God as Truth are all phases of freedom. For one whose life was permeated by the belief in the presence of a higher spiritual reality, any compromise with evil, lust and slavery is wrong. Hence freedom has to be realized at all levels. Hence he wrote “I do not divide life into watertight compartment.”<sup>20</sup> In western psychology and philosophy, there has been created an unhealthy separation of the different forms of freedom like the metaphysical freedom of the human self against cosmic necessity and the psychological freedom of will<sup>21</sup> and action ; and furthermore, there have been discussions about the reconciliation of individual freedom and social and political authority. But Gandhi’s conception of freedom can be stated to be a synthesis of the natural right of the individual to attain political liberty as well as moral and spiritual freedom. Thus he does not maintain any sharp separation between the *inner* moral and spiritual freedom and the *outer* freedom. Inner freedom is bound to consummate also in external freedom from the unjustified restraints of society, church and state, because a man who obtains freedom over his passions would not tolerate the social and economic exploitation of his neighbours because they are really his own selves.

Gandhi’s scheme of comprehensive freedom as elucidated in the *Hind-Swaraj* can be thus represented :

- (i) True Swaraj == kingdom of the soul (Spiritual and Moral Freedom).
- (ii) Satyagraha as the key to it. (Political Freedom)  
(Satyagraha == *Dayabala* or *Atmabala*).
- (iii) *Swadeshi*=(Economic Freedom)  
(Necessary for putting Satyagraha into practice).

(a) *Personal and Civic Freedom.* Gandhi pleaded for personal freedom and civic freedom. On March 17, 1917, he was served with a notice to quit the district of Champaran. But he had disobeyed it on political and moral grounds. He accepted the sanctity of the freedom of the person and declared : “The person of a citizen must be held inviolate. It can only be touched to arrest or to prevent violence.”<sup>22</sup> He also advocated freedom of speech<sup>23</sup> and

19 In an article written in the *Harijan*, August 19, 1939, Gandhi had supported the demand of the Arya Samaj and showed his acceptance of “religious and cultural” freedom.

20 *Harijan*, February 20, 1937.

21 Gandhi in his *Autobiography*, p. 18, says that the question of free-will and fate is a permanent “mystery”.

22 *Young India*, April 24, 1930.

23 Gandhi, in his trial speech (1922), championed freedom of expression.

pen because this freedom was the foundation of Swaraj. In his opinion, civil liberties are the very foundation of democracy. With his blessings the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress in 1931 passed a resolution on fundamental rights. In a speech on November 13, 1931, at the meeting of the Minorities Committee of the London Round Table Conference, Gandhi stated that the Congress would always support "fundamental rights and civil liberty."

When India had been made a party to the European war in 1939 against her will, Gandhi strongly pleaded in 1940 for freedom of speech even during wartime. He wrote : "But freedom of speech and corresponding action is the breath of democratic life. Freedom of propagating non-violence as substitute for war is the most relevant when indecent savagery is being perpetrated by the warring nations of Europe."<sup>24</sup> He said at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee in September 16, 1940 : "But if they (the British) fight unto death for their freedom and if they are at all reasonable, they must recognize our right of free speech."

In 1940, Gandhi pleaded for "freedom of speech, a free press and pure justice" even for the people of the Indian States.<sup>25</sup>

He also wanted "complete civil liberty"<sup>26</sup> and the independence of the judiciary. In the case of trial in a court it is one of the primary rights of the accused to get the help of a counsel or advocate. This is an important civil right because it prevents the punishment of a person without giving him a chance to defend himself. Gandhi also accepted this right of defence by a counsel as an important civil right but for persons arrested and prosecuted in Satyagraha cases he would not like any defence to be made. Occasionally statements to the court, however, would be read out.

(b) *Political Freedom.* Gandhi's devotion to the concept of individual rights made him a fighter for democratic freedoms. In South Africa, as earlier pointed out, he launched the Satyagraha movement for safeguarding the civil rights of Indians. He stood up for the rights of the poor suppressed indigo-planters in Champaran in 1917. He effectively sponsored the cause of the labourers in the spinning factories in Ahmedabad in February-March, 1918. He also championed the rights of the peasants of the Khaira district in Gujarat in March-May 1918. He advised the peasants of Khaira not to pay rents because crops had failed and the government reluctantly acceded to the demands of the peasants.

Gandhi accepted the truth of the famous Mantra given by Tilak that Swaraj is the birthright of Indians. In an article entitled "Tampering with Loyalty" he wrote that spreading disaffection

<sup>24</sup> *Harijan*, September 22, 1940.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, April 20, 1940.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, July 13, 1940.

against the British Government in India was the Dharma of Indians.<sup>27</sup> He condemned British imperialism because it resulted in the political and economic prostration of India. In his famous Trial Speech on March 19, 1922, he had said :

“I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically. A disarmed India has no power of resistance against any aggressor if she wanted to engage in an armed conflict with him. So much is this the case that some of our best men consider that India must take generations before she can achieve the Dominion Status. She has become so poor that she has little power of resisting famines.”

Hence he had dedicated his life from 1920 onwards to secure the freedom of India from imperialistic bondage.<sup>28</sup> He wrote :

“We are challenging the might of this Government because we consider its activity to be wholly evil. We want to overthrow the Government. We want to compel its submission to the people’s will. We desire to show that the government exists to serve the people, not the people the Government. Free life under the Government has become intolerable, for the price exacted for the retention of freedom is unconsciously great. Whether we are one or many, we must refuse to purchase freedom at the cost of our self-respect or our cherished convictions.”

Gandhi who had begun his political career in 1893 as a believer in the goodness and justice of the British Empire and who clung to that belief till 1919, became transformed into a defiant champion of Swaraj (in 1920) and of “purna swaraj” (in 1929), and of national self-determination. In 1928, he had supported Motilal Nehru in the demand only of Dominion Status but in 1929, he sided with the radical younger elements in the Congress who wanted it (the Congress) to accept complete independence as its goal. Political freedom in the sense of national independence of the country from the iron chains of British imperialism became the passion of his soul. He would like the British to remain in India but only as equals and not as masters.

Sometimes in the name of political freedom Gandhi would be satisfied with the “substance of freedom”. In the early months of 1930, Gandhi came out with his following “Eleven Points” which would provide the main essence of swaraj :

27 He also said : “..for me every ruler is alien that defies public opinion.”

28 In 1939, Gandhi declared : “The Congress is at war with Great Britain till independence is won.”—(*Harjan*).

- (i) Total prohibition.
- (ii) Restoration of the exchange rate of the rupee to 1 s. 4 d.
- (iii) Reduction of land revenue by 50%.
- (iv) Abolition of the salt tax.
- (v) Reduction of military expenditure by at least 50% to start with.
- (vi) Reduction of civil service salaries by 50%.
- (vii) Protective tariff against foreign cloth.
- (viii) A coastal reservation bill to be enacted.
- (ix) Discharge of all political prisoners except those charged with criminal acts.
- (x) Abolition of the C.I.D.
- (xi) Issue of licences for fire-arms for self-defence.

But it cannot be denied that as of a realistic political leader, in response to the intensification of the national movement in the country, Gandhi's concept of political freedom also went on assuming a more radical and defiant character.

The Swaraj of Gandhi's conception was to champion the interests of the down-trodden and starving millions. Thus he had a democratic conception of Swaraj. He said : "I want the rule of and for the masses of India. Lokamanya has taught us that Home Rule or Swaraj is their birthright." All sections of the people were to receive an enhanced status in Swaraj. He said :

"But the Swaraj of my—our—dream recognizes no race or religious distinctions. Nor is it to be the monopoly of lettered persons nor yet of moneyed men. Swaraj is to be for all, including the farmer, but emphatically including the maimed, the blind, the starving toiling millions. A stout-hearted, honest, sane, illiterate man may well be the first servant of the nation."<sup>29</sup>

Gandhi emphatically pleaded for freedom in the sense of national independence and passionately and eloquently demanded "the rose of liberty" at the Second Round Table Conference in London in 1931. In his radio broadcast for American listeners, during his visit to England to attend the Second Round Table Conference, he had appealed to the conscience of mankind "to come to the rescue of a people dying to regain its liberty."

With great sociological insight, Gandhi warned the imperialistic countries that domination over others would jeopardise the moral fibre of the great powers. In a speech delivered in 1931 at Eton, Gandhi had warned : "No one chains a slave without chaining

himself. And no nation keeps another in subjection without herself turning into a subject nation."

He also said : "I cannot conceive a people governing themselves rightly through a government imposed from without, even as the fabled jackdaw could not walk like a peacock with feathers borrowed from his elegant companion."<sup>30</sup>

In his historic speech at the All India Congress Committee in August 1942, Gandhi thundered :

"I want freedom immediately, this very night, before dawn . . . Today they (the masses) have no touch of life left. It has been crushed out of them. If lustre is to be put into their eyes, freedom has to come not tomorrow but today."

Being a believer in the concept of political and national freedom Gandhi adhered to the theory of "self-determination". He has stated in 1940 that the demand for a Constituent Assembly was in response to the desire to realize the concept of self-determination. In his letter to M.A. Jinnah in September, 1944, Gandhi accepted that "the first condition of the exercise of the right of self-determination is achieving of Independence by the joint action of all the parties and groups composing India."

Only firm, steady and organised efforts could succeed in realizing freedom. The regeneration of India demanded ceaseless efforts. Only constant, regular and habitual efforts and enterprise could rehabilitate the shattered society and political system of the country.

Gandhi prescribed rigorous self-control, discipline, moral exercise and patient suffering for the winning of Swaraj. Even in his early writings, for example, he categorically states that freedom does not mean license. One may enjoy what is his but should never attempt to rob others of what is theirs. He says : "Humility, earnestness, thoughtfulness—these are the foundations of Swarajya."<sup>31</sup> He also wrote : "Voluntary discipline was the first requisite of corporate freedom. If the people were well-behaved, the Government officials would become their true servants." Only a Swaraj won by patient suffering and sacrifice could be lasting and stable. Political freedom or Swaraj could be obtained only by intense suffering and struggle. It would be chimerical to believe that it could come as a gift. In 1929, Gandhi said : "A man who is made for freedom has got to take tremendous risks and stake everything." He said at the Second Round Table Conference in 1931 : "...the page of history is soiled red with the blood of those who have fought for freedom." He believed that Indians were entitled to freedom because of the immense sufferings they had undergone for it.

<sup>30</sup> *Harijan*, November 25, 1939.

<sup>31</sup> *The Indian Opinion* of 1909, (*Collected Works*, Vol. IX, p. 451).

Political freedom also postulated social cohesiveness, besides disciplined suffering. It is essential to combine the quest for political individuality with the voluntary acceptance of social and political discipline which is the basis of social solidarity and cohesiveness. A divided and disrupted social structure could not wage successful political struggles. Only a community constituted by persons imbued with a sense of deep social cohesiveness can attain the benefits of Swaraj. Hence Gandhi stressed communal unity and the absolute elimination of untouchability among the foundations of political freedom.

(c) *Economic Freedom.* Gandhi stressed the economic prerequisites and foundations of freedom since he would accept that economic resources act as an effective apparatus for the realization of man's will. He felt that freedom was bound to remain a mere philosophical abstraction unless the vast masses had some gainful employment. Unemployment snatches the morsel from the mouth of the poor villagers and completely damages the personality of the victims. Hence Gandhi wrote : "Political freedom has no meaning for the millions if they do not know how to employ their enforced idleness.

As a moral prophet of Ram-rajya, Gandhi accepted the doctrine of equal distribution. A fundamental item in actualizing genuine equality, as discussed earlier, will be the revolutionary step of the acceptance and practice of equality of wages for the lawyer, the doctor or the teacher who are entitled to no more than the Bhangi. This would provide the key to true civilization and be the basis of the reconstruction of an ideal humanity.

Thus Gandhi pleaded that all useful labour should bring the same and adequate wages to the worker. But until that rather remote ideal of equal distribution was realized, he prescribed a more realistic formula of equitable distribution for the immediate present. The proposal was that every labourer should get enough remuneration to feed and clothe himself and his family. It was the imperative duty of the government to ensure this much to all. "A government that does not ensure this much is no government. It is anarchy. Such a State should be resisted peacefully."<sup>32</sup>

(d) *Moral and Spiritual Freedom.* According to Gandhi, moral and spiritual freedom depend on the effective cultivation of the ancient virtues of truth and non-violence. Moral freedom means the conquest of the demands of the senses and the appetites, for the realization of the higher self. Thus the self-subsistence of the particular will has to be purified by the devoted adherence to truth and non-violence.<sup>33</sup> Self-indulgence eventually leads to destruction.

<sup>32</sup> *Harijan*, June 9, 1946.

<sup>33</sup> In 1940, Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* : "It is impossible to win Swarajya non-violently unless there is self-purification." He pointed out that the stress on self-purification had been a vital part of Congress politics since 1920.

The conquest of empirical desires alone is the path to immortality. Hence Gandhi stressed the rigid adherence to the code of Maha-vrata (the eleven great vows) in his Ashrama. The daily repetition of the vows was a deliberate attempt to strengthen one's moral resolve. Gandhi firmly believed that immature persons subject to the fluctuations of temporary emotions and arbitrary fancies and passions could not enjoy moral freedom. He wrote :

“Freedom is a fruit of suffering, licence is born of violence. What we are all pining for freedom that imposes restraints upon itself for the sake of society. Licence imposes suffering upon society so that it may enjoy exclusive privileges.”<sup>34</sup>

Hence he never accepted the view of freedom as arbitrariness or licence. Genuine freedom results in self-denial for the sake of society. Thus genuine Swaraj is a function of the development of the moral sources of power.

Spiritual freedom for Gandhi lay not in the self-centred assertions of the claims of the individual ego but in identification with the Supreme Being. He went to the extent of stating at the Belgaum Congress in 1924 that Swaraj is part of Truth. This view amounts almost to a sanctification and spiritualization even of the work of national emancipation or freedom.<sup>35</sup> Freedom is the essence of man's spiritual personality. Like Rousseau in the *Social Contract*, Gandhi also considers freedom as the essence of man. If freedom is renounced, man becomes an “automaton”. Any attempt to build a society by the denial of liberty is “contrary to the very nature of man.”<sup>36</sup> The renunciation of freedom would be the repudiation of human conscience. If Truth is God, and if the Constructive Programme and Satyagraha which are the bases and technics for the realization of Swaraj, are also, by implication, part of Truth, then it implies a conception of God as concrete real unity, an organic universal manifold including different entities<sup>37</sup> and not an undifferentiated abstract universal absolutely removed from human struggles. He said : “On the principle that the greater includes the less, national independence or material freedom is included in the spiritual.”

Gandhi laid down two stringent prerequisites for the enshrinement of moral and spiritual freedom. First, his conception of moral and spiritual freedom postulates the cultivation of *Anasakti*, or disinterestedness. As a follower of the Bhagavadgita, he stressed absolute disinterestedness, complete imperturbability and a resignation to the will of God as the essence of *Karmayoga*. Disinterested-

<sup>34</sup> *Young India*, May 1, 1930.

<sup>35</sup> “I regard the winning of Indian independence by non-violent means as God's own work.” – (*Harijan*, 1940).

<sup>36</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, Vol. I, p. 267.

<sup>37</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, April 3, 1924, p. 109 : “Only a free India can worship the true God.”

ness (Anasakti) is linked up with spontaneous devotion to the cause of the good of all living beings. The essence of the Karmayoga of the Gita is the subjective disposition to will the good of all and to work according to what is inherently right without being attached to results. Disinterestedness or desirelessness results in the concentration of energy. In place of the misuse of mental and moral resources in imagining about future consequences, Karmayoga stresses utmost concentration of efforts in the path of dedication to duty. Hence non-attachment as stressed in the theory of Karmayoga accepted by Gandhi is completely removed from the charge of passivity sometimes levelled against it.

Besides disinterestedness, the second necessary requirement for moral and spiritual freedom is fearlessness. Fearlessness can be acquired by making a surrender to God whose implication and consequence is the absolute refusal to be bound by mundane temptations and threats. A man who realizes his spiritual humanity is not afraid of any law except the law of God. In a speech at the anniversary of the Gurukul Kangri, he said :

“In my humble opinion, fearlessness is the first thing indispensable before we could achieve anything permanent and real. This quality is unattainable without religious consciousness. Let us fear God and we shall cease to fear man. If we grasp the fact that there is a divinity within us which witnessed everything we think or do and which protects us and guides us along the true path, it is clear that we shall cease to have any other fear on the face of the earth save the fear of God. Loyalty to the Governor of governors supersedes all other loyalty and gives an intelligent basis to the latter.”<sup>38</sup>

Being a spiritual and ethical idealist, Gandhi was an optimist. Although critical of the mechanical and technological aspects of modern western civilization, he had abiding faith in the realization of freedom in the future. He is, hence, more optimistic than Max Weber, according to whom there are slender prospects of genuine human freedom because of the accentuated technological rationality of the modern age. According to Gandhi, on the other hand, it is possible to have freedom in the modern age if there is a moral renaissance of man. Hence, against the immense and engulfsing power of the technological and political structure, he stood for the purification of motives and conduct as the sure way to freedom. There can be no genuine freedom without the practice of moral obedience to the laws of the Spirit. The perfection of the value of liberty, equality, social justice and fearlessness will act as foundations for the kingdom of God on earth. Gandhi's life was dedicated to this end and this is his message.

#### 4. Concepts of Equality and Justice

Gandhi championed the concept of equality on metaphysical grounds. His devotion to equality was a necessary consequence of his deep and passionate belief in the spiritual essence of all human beings. He said :

“Since He pervades every fibre of my being and of all of you, I derive from it the doctrine of equality of all creatures on earth and it should satisfy the cravings of all philosophical communists.”<sup>39</sup>

Thus he had a moral reverence for life and stood for the equality of man and had an immense concern with the acquisition and extension of the rights and dignity of the human being. Every man is equal in the eye of God as the Gita points out. Hence every man should also be legally and politically equal.

The acceptance of the equality of all human beings on the metaphysical ground of their emergence from one spiritual source, however, only implies their essential or fundamental equality. It certainly does never mean the mechanical formula of absolute equalization. Physical and intellectual inequalities were to persist for all time but maximum efforts had to be put in to provide equal opportunities for the growth of the respective talents of all persons.

Gandhi appeared as a great champion of the right to equality. But never would he confuse equality with patronization or condescension. He wanted the cultivation of genuine regard and respect for the rights and dignity of others. In South Africa he discovered that he had no fundamental right as a man and as an Indian. Hence he eloquently and actively defended the claims of equality of the Indian population. He said that in 1899, 1906, 1914 and 1915 he came to the help of the British empire because he felt that due to his voluntary services rendered in times of need, the empire would grant to Indians “a status of full equality” in the empire. But because, to his amazement, he discovered that imperialism is a soulless machine he became a staunch non-cooperator and fought for the political equality of the Indians with the British. To the great credit of Gandhi and Gokhale, it has to be recognised that due to their efforts the iniquitous indenture system was first prohibited in Natal and then in the whole empire. Even later on, Gandhi was greatly perturbed by the recrudescence of racialism in South Africa. He wrote in passionate terms :

“The real ‘White man’s burden’ is not insolently to dominate coloured or Black people under the guise of protection, it is

to desist from the hypocrisy which is eating into them. It is time White men learnt to treat every human being as their equal. There is no mystery about whiteness of the skin. It has repeatedly been proved that given equal opportunity a man, be he of any colour or country, is fully equal to any other.”<sup>40</sup>

Gandhi refused to make the least distinction either in theory or practice between man and man. He writes :

“Nor do I believe in inequalities between human beings. We are all absolutely equal. But equality is of souls and not bodies. Hence, it is mental state. We need to think of, and to assert, equality because we see great inequalities in the physical world. We have to realize equality in the midst of this apparent external inequality. Assumption of superiority by any person over any other is a sin against God and man.”<sup>41</sup>

He stood, hence, for the recognition of the equal rights of Indians and Asians to those of the Whites.

He felt that the widespread racial discrimination against Asiatics and Negroes practised by the White imperialistic groups of Europe and America and the unwarranted irrational practice of untouchability practised by the Hindu community were both manifestations of the same virus of inequality. Being a champion of equality and the rights of man, Gandhi fought both the evils. According to the Gandhian theory, racial and social equality is a necessary accompaniment of freedom. He, hence, felt that political freedom without social and racial equality was thoroughly inadequate and even illusory.

The concept of equality has to be realized in practice also at political and economic levels. Hence all kinds of unjustified privileges and coercive constraints of the ruling classes have to be eliminated. Gandhi, therefore, proposed that if all Indians voluntarily did spinning for one hour everyday, then not only would wealth be created but a vast sense of spiritual confraternity and unity could be generated which would lead to the withering away of the sense of superiority and hierarchy. The vast human and non-human resources of the country had to be utilized in an organised way for the realization of human equality at all levels.

Like St. Augustine, Gandhi stood for justice in the commonwealth and stated ; “The first condition of non-violence is justice

40 *Harijan*, June 30, 1946.

41 M. K. Gandhi, “Caste and Communal Question”, *Young India*, June 4, 1931, (*To the Students*, Hingorani ed., p. 292).

all around in every department of life.” The central evils against which Gandhi fought were racialism, imperialism, communalism and untouchability. In South Africa he fought against the racially discriminatory polities of the Whites. In India, as a reformer, he fought against social injustices and oppressions. According to him, no one could be actively non-violent and not rise against social injustices.

As a moral teacher, certainly, he championed the conception of justice as an attribute of the soul. But he also wanted social, political and economic justice and felt that justice has to manifest its active power in all the spheres of one’s existence. His crusade against untouchability and his leadership of the Indian independence movement were based on ideals of social and political justice. Thus, there were liberalist and humanist orientations to his concept of nationalism. He worked for raising the dignity and extolling and elevating the spirit of a vast agglomeration of people because he felt that before India could play its role in World politics and culture, Indian manhood was to be strengthened and revitalized and purged of all social perversities and moral weaknesses. He wanted that India should develop the positive virtue of justice and eliminate all social and economic discriminations. Hence his cry of Swaraj or independence was a call for the vindication of denied justice to all sections of the Indian population. He claimed that the Indian National Congress stood for the interests of all sections of the country. By his devotion to the pursuit of the ideal of justice Gandhi succeeded in welding, to a great extent, the Indian people into an organised if not organic political community.

He inculcated justice even for his antagonists. He had already indicated his devotion to justice by not undertaking the Satyagraha march of the Indian community in December, 1913, when the South African government was faced with strike of workers because he did not want to take advantage even of the opponents.<sup>42</sup> He thus upheld universal justice. He makes a distinction between the ancient or pure or eastern conception of justice which is permeated with fellow-feeling and mercy and the modern one which clamours for the recognition of one’s right without any regard for the convenience of the other party. He said : “It is desirable that we do not introduce this ‘despicable’ justice in India.”<sup>43</sup>

42 In the last week of December, 1913, there was a great strike of the European railway workers in South Africa. The Union Government was embarrassed. Some friends advised Gandhi to undertake the Satyagraha march at this favourable time. But he refused as his aim was not to harass the Government. He said that the Satyagraha struggle was “entirely different and differently conceived” and hence he stated that the Indians could not assist the railway strikers. This decision of Gandhi created “a deep impression”.—M. K. Gandhi, ‘The Beginning of the End’, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, p. 325.

43 M. K. Gandhi, *Economic and Industrial Life and Relations*, III, pp.123-25.

## 5. Gandhi's Theory of Democracy

(a) *Critique of Western Democracies and Majoritarianism.* Although a fighter for the democratic conception of individual civil, political and economic rights, Gandhi was opposed to the procedures and practices of British parliamentary democracy. The *Hind-Swaraj* contains his indictment of the British parliamentary practices and procedures. He regarded the British parliament as sterile and barren. He criticized the inertia, apathy, ostentation and selfishness of the members of that assembly. Quoting a saying of Carlyle, he regarded the Parliament as a talking-shop. He could not sympathize with the almost blind voting system on party lines and stated that the dictation of parties leads to the decline of the voice and personality of private members. He referred to the almost hopeless surrender of the Parliament into the hands of the prime ministers who would often lack honesty and purity of feeling. The legislative and constitutional activity of Parliament is marked by sharp fluctuations of party and political opinions. At times the misguided press creates sensations and scandals by magnifying small issues into big crises. Gandhi had written this formidable indictment of the British Parliament in 1909. His later experiences in life also did not create any favourable impression on his mind regarding the western democratic institutions and practices.

Gandhi bitterly condemned western democratic politics because they were infected with threefold contradictions.<sup>44</sup> First, they believed in the limitless expansion of capitalism and this resulted in the exploitation of the weaker peoples. Gandhi censured the vindictive imperialism<sup>45</sup> and ruthless repression carried on in Asia and Africa by "the so-called democracies."<sup>46</sup> He mockingly remarked that if a band of robbers have among them a "democratic constitution in order to enable them to carry on their robbing operations more effectively" they could not deserve the name of democracy. Some of the democratic governments even took recourse to fascistic technics. This elicited the adverse opinion of Gandhi : "Western democracy as it functions today is undiluted Nazism or Fascism. At best it is merely a cloak to hide the Nazi and the fascist tendencies of imperialism."<sup>47</sup> Like L.T. Hobhouse and W. G. Sumner, Gandhi is a critic of imperialism. Unlike Kidd, he refused to see any social good in imperialism and hence from 1920 onwards, he engaged in a protracted struggle against the British imperialism. He frankly stated that it was not through democratic methods that Great Britain had conquered India. He wrote:

<sup>44</sup> *Harajan*, May 18, 1940.

<sup>45</sup> Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. VI, p. 113.

<sup>46</sup> *Harajan*, April 15, 1940.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, May 18, 1940.

"I assert in all humility, but with all the strength at my command, that liberty and democracy become unholy when their hands are dyed red with innocent blood. I hear the living Christ saying, 'These so-called children of mine know not what they are doing. They take my Father's name in vain, for they disobey the central command of my Father !' . . . And why have I uttered the Truth ? Because I am confident that God made me the instrument of showing the better way. If Britain seeks justice, she must appear before the Imperial Court of God with clean hands."<sup>48</sup>

Secondly, he criticized the policies of racialism followed in South Africa and the southern parts of U.S.A.

Thirdly, with great political realism, Gandhi also emphasized that the western democracies were dominated by the ruling classes. In answer to an American questioner, Gandhi categorically stated in an article "Democracy and Non-Violence", that America is "owned by a few capitalist owners. The same is true of South Africa."<sup>49</sup> The ruling classes carried on a game of unhindered imperialistic exploitation in the colonial world. It is true that a part of the profits obtained from this spoliation was also distributed to the masses of western humanity. But really speaking the masses "are being exploited by the ruling class or caste under the sacred name of democracy... Shorn of all the camouflage, the exploitation of the masses of Europe is sustained by violence."<sup>50</sup> Hence Gandhi concluded with great insight : "The peoples of Europe have no doubt political power, but no swaraj."<sup>51</sup> The use of the term "ruling class" by Gandhi is significant in the context of comparative political science. It was made popular by the Italian political scientist, Gaetano Mosca, the author of *The Ruling Class*. The idealistic-romantic concept of the nation as a spiritual totality had been challenged in the nineteenth century by the Marxists with their view that in society there is a continuing antagonism between the exploiters and the exploited. In the twentieth century, the Italian school of "realist" politics and sociology led by Pareto, Mosca and Roberto Michels sponsored the theory of the circulation of the elite (Pareto), the ruling class (Mosca) and the oligarchy in party leadership (Michels). Mosca, Pareto and Michels have familiarized students of political science with the notion of the dominant and strategic position of the elite although the roots of this notion can be traced to Marx and Tolstoy.

Hence due to the prevalence of these three contradictions—imperialism, racialism and capitalism—with a degree of exaggeration

48 Both Marx and Gandhi point out the antithesis between Christianity and Colonialism.

49 *Harjan*, May 18, 1940.

50 *Young India*, September 3, 1925.

51 *Ibid.*

characteristic of a moral prophet, Gandhi said : "The European democracies are to my mind a negation of democracy."<sup>52</sup>

Gandhi was a critic of democratic majoritarianism and could not tolerate the autonomous sanctity of the verdict of the 51%, howsoever procured. He would not be satisfied with the formal adherence to the external mechanism of the parliamentary type of government. He wanted a democratic government where individual liberty and freedom of opinion and action would be scrupulously protected and even the minority would be not coerced but only persuaded, respected and converted. He felt that the majority should manifest the "magnanimity" to persuade the minority even through self-suffering. Thus the "tyranny of the majority" has no place in his thought. Gandhi's theory of "conversion" of the minority is a great antithesis to the almost threatening and ominous implications of Rousseau's view that the general will can force the particular wills to be free. Gandhi's opposition to the Lockean majoritarianism and the Benthamite formula of the greatest happiness of the greatest number proceeds from his spiritual concern about the good of all human beings. He would never agree to any agreement whereby the interests of the minority could be sacrificed.<sup>53</sup> That a minority should yield always to the majority, Gandhi considered an unfounded dogma of political science because, like John Stuart Mill, he also accepted that all reforms are rooted in the initiative, efforts and plans of a few daring and adventurous people. In Gandhian democracy, however, there is the possibility, in extreme cases, of the non-violent social ostracism of the defiant minority. He says, "I can conceive the possibility of non-violent social ostracism under certain extreme conditions, when a defiant minority refuses to bend to the majority, not out of any regard for principle but from sheer defiance or worse. But that time has certainly not arrived."<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, in matters of conscience, Gandhi stubbornly refused to be bound by the decisions of the majority.<sup>55</sup> He declared : "it is slavery to be amenable to the majority no matter what its decisions are." Explaining his theory of "Real Democracy" Gandhi said in a Press Conference on September 28, 1944 :

"The way of approaching a question is not to examine the numerical strength of those behind the opinion, but to exa-

52 *Harijan*, July 21, 1940.

53 At the New Delhi Seminar on "Gandhian Outlook and Techniques", Prof. Massignon suggested that Gandhi's views with regard to minorities could be realized by creating zones of security for minorities where they could retain their own culture without interference from the side of the majority. I personally do not accept any delimitation of a cultural zone for minorities. In India, it would increase the trends towards disintegration.

54 *Satyagraha*, p. 147.

55 He once wrote in the *Young India*: "...in matters of conscience the law of majority has no place."

mine the soundness of the opinion on merits, or else we will never reach a solution, and if we reach one, it will be a blind solution simply because it is the wish of the largest body. If the largest body does wrong, it is up to me to say you are wrong and not to submit. 'The rule of majority does not mean that it should suppress the opinion of even an individual, if it is sound.'<sup>56</sup> An individual's opinion should have greater weight than the opinion of many, if that opinion is sound on merits. That is my view of real democracy'."<sup>57</sup>

But Gandhi does not specify the criteria of determination of "the merits" of an issue. Like a prophet, he is content with enunciating a moral philosophy but how the tremendously mounting business of parliamentary bodies is to be carried on from day to day if a single individual's opinion has a superior prevailing power, be it even on grounds of merit, he does not discuss.

(b) *Foundations of Democracy.* Gandhi accepted the consensual theory of government and thoroughly believed in the "immutable maxim that government of the people is possible only so long as they consent either consciously or unconsciously to be governed."<sup>58</sup> He adhered to the democratic concept that power belongs to the people.<sup>59</sup> He wrote :

"A superficial study of British history has made us think that all power percolates to the people from parliaments. The truth is that power resides in the people and it is entrusted for the time being to those whom they may choose as their representative. Parliaments have no power or even existence independently of the people."

Popular sovereignty, in practice, is expressed through governance by representatives. But since Gandhi categorically stated that power resides in the people, and not among the representatives, he was unequivocally committed to the enshrinement of popular consent.

A true democratic government derives its justification from its readiness to respond to public opinion because supreme political power vests in the people. It is true that in several democratic countries the ruling class has originally obtained ascendancy through political and military force. It is also true that in most democratic countries the legal and political authority would punish the recalcitrant groups who do not abide by the commands and pronouncements of the established legal mechanism. Nevertheless, in spite of the occa-

56 Gandhi wrote : "Meticulous care for the rights of the least among us is the *sine qua non* of non-violence."

57 Gandhi thus exalts intelligence above numbers.

58 *Young India*, November 3, 1927.

59 Gandhi said : "My faith is in God and therefore in the people."—*Harijan*, 1940.

sional utilization of violence, it remains true that the democratic philosophy is essentially based on the unequivocal acceptance of the supremacy of unrestrained public opinion. Gandhi, hence, recognized the great significance and value of public opinion and would even sanction Satyagraha if it was flouted. As a spiritual idealist, he felt that people's voice is God's voice. Hence he thought that the democratic spirit had to be actively cultivated both by the public and the decision-makers.

Public opinion is the basis of democratic governance and, hence, Gandhi recognized that "Legislation in advance of public opinion has often been demonstrated to be futile."<sup>60</sup>

He always stated that political obedience could not be elicited by coercive sovereign power. According to Gandhi, obedience could be rendered only to an authority which was rooted in the traditions, aspirations and sentiments of the people. But whether the political authority was genuinely entitled to obedience or not could be decided not by any formal edict or promulgation of ordinance but by winning the allegiance of man's inner conscience. Thus the inner conscience was the supreme test for judging the validity of any law or the justifiability of any political authority.

Unlike the extreme realists and historical materialists, Gandhi would not consider all legislation passed by the representative assemblies as the coercive apparatus of the ascendant classes. He said : "Legislation imposed by people upon themselves is non-violence to the extent it is possible in society."<sup>61</sup>

He also stresses the educational foundations of democracy. He wrote :

"In democracy even pure men may unconsciously give wrong decisions. The remedy is more and purer education, greater awakening of the public and in such quickened atmosphere the rise of a number of public workers whose sole duty will be to speak, write and act so as to serve as bright examples for the public."<sup>62</sup>

Only by being educated could the people wisely exercise their political will and express their consent to significant political policies and decisions. Gandhi, however, differs from western theorists of democracy in stressing not so much bookish education as education in character. He thereby wants to provide a moral foundation to the democratic process.

Like Plato, Gandhi wanted that the members of the governing

60 *Young India*, July 2, 1931.

61 *Harijan*, July 21, 1940.

62 *Ibid.*, March 17, 1946.

group should lead a simple life.<sup>63</sup> The governors and administrators must be content with being the servants of the nation and their status and prestige should be based not upon the acquisition of power, wealth and external pomp but upon devotion to a noble cause. He wanted even the members of the top administrative cadre to practice simplicity. Once he said that even after freedom, Englishmen could come to India either in an adventurous spirit or for doing penances and "willingly serve on a small salary and put up with the rigours of the Indian climate." The elaborate amenities and facilities provided to the old I.C.S., which Gandhi used to say is not really the Indian Civil Service but the English Civil Service since even the Indian members of the service used to serve the interests of a foreign imperialism, greatly pained Gandhi as it was absolutely incongruous with the abject poverty of the people. He wrote : "Even free India will not be able to accommodate a greater number of public servants. A Collector then will not need the number of servants he has got today. He will be his own servant."<sup>64</sup>

Gandhi also attempts to provide a psychological and moral bulwark to democracy. He believed that the moralization of democracy meant the cultivation of the sentiments of sympathy, fellow-feeling and freedom from bigotry. In other words, the moralization of the democratic process meant the cultivation of spiritual humanism.

Gandhism did perform a great service to democratic theory by the stress on the tolerance of the opinions of political antagonists, co-operation, love and service. Tolerance is one of the essential basis of democratic political philosophy. Gandhi wrote :

"Evolution of democracy is not possible if we are not prepared to hear the other side. We shut the doors of reason when we refuse to listen to our opponents, or, having listened, make fun of them. If intolerance becomes a habit, we run the risk of missing the truth. Whilst, with the limits that Nature has put upon our understanding, we must act fearlessly according to the light vouchsafed to us, we must always keep an open mind and be ever ready to find that what we believed to be truth was, after all, untruth. This openness of mind strengthens the truth in us."<sup>65</sup>

Gandhi is willing to accept the worth of the modern institutional ingredients of democracy like representation, decentralization, etc. The democracy of his conception postulates however, not merely the requisite institutional frame-work but demands deeper

63 As also indicated in Gandhi's conversations with Ernest Barker in 1931. E. Barker, "Gandhi as Bridge and Reconciler", in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *M. Gandhi*, p. 62.

64 *Young India*, March 20, 1930.

65 *Harijan*, May 31, 1942.

roots. Politically, democracy demands scrupulous exactness in dealing with opponents.<sup>66</sup> Gandhi regarded it wholly wrong and undemocratic for the individuals to take the law into their own hands.<sup>67</sup> Economically, democracy means that the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest.<sup>68</sup>

He wanted to make democracy the basis for the cultivation of autonomy and progress. Hence against the encroachments of imperialistic totalitarianism upon the democratic system he felt that heroic courage and resistance were the only bulwarks of the democratic countries.<sup>69</sup>

Gandhi's stress on popular consent, thus, differs from the theory of Jefferson because he (Gandhi) insisted not only on "sovereignty of the people" but was firm upon basing it on "pure moral authority."<sup>70</sup> Moral authority is obtained through the adherence to spiritual norms and values. Gandhi pleaded for the harmony between political power and moral authority. This will imply a synthesis of the modern democratic institutional mechanism with the spiritual and moral traditions of polities as enunciated by Vyasa, Bhism and Thomas Aquinas. Hence democracy will mean the sovereignty of the unrestrained consent of the dumb, starving millions as well as the autonomy of the moral will of all. In discussing the fundamental bases of democracy, Gandhi is talking at both political and moral levels. When he refers to "consent of the people" being ascertained by adult suffrage, he is talking at the institutional level on western democratic patterns. But the Satyagrahi soul of Gandhi would not be satisfied only by institutional devices. He also refers to the "sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority." Thus while electoral majority will vindicate popular sovereignty at the institutional level, moral authority will require as its basis the adherence to highest norms.

In Gandhism, we find, thus, the synthesis of the idea of the democratic political structure and the tradition of natural law philosophy. Like Cicero and Aquinas, Gandhi believes in a higher law. He sincerely believes that above the civil law even if formulated and promulgated by democratic structures is the law of God, obedience to which is categorial.

66 *Young India*, August 12, 1920.

67 *Harijan*, September 21, 1947.

68 *Ibid.*, May 18, 1940.

69 *Ibid.*, January 1, 1947.

70 M. K. Gandhi, "A Restatement of Faith", *Harijan*, January 2, 1937, p. 374. Gandhi says that the Congress constitutions of Nagpur and Bombay are an attempt to achieve the type of Swaraj "enshrining sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority." An ardent Gandhian, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, *At the Feet of Mahatma Gandhi*, (Bombay, Hind Kitabs, 1955), p. 104, also eloquently pleads that some device has to be made in the Indian Constitution for ensuring that the legislators and administrators in India have knowledge, and more than knoweldge, character.

(c) *Democracy in India.* Although, in the *Hindi-Swaraj*, Gandhi was bitterly hostile to the patterns of functioning of the British Parliament, he prescribed for India a parliamentary government based on universal suffrage. His conception of Swaraj inculcated a government based on the consent of the people. This consent of the people was to be ascertained by the largest number of adult population. He wrote :

“By Swaraj, I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native born or domiciled, who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters.”<sup>71</sup>

He felt that for the success of a democratic government it was essential that the representatives should be given only general instructions and should not be subjected to detailed dependence on the electorate. It will not be possible for the legislature to operate if the representatives were compelled to consult the constituencies on all issues. Hence in the general terms of political theory it can be said that he upheld the ‘*mandate*’ and not the ‘*delegate*’ theory for the representative. It may be noted that Burke was a classic advocate of the mandate theory of representation. For himself, Gandhi was ready to surrender his own judgment, in most matters, to the national representatives. But he also stated that if national life became so perfect as to become self-regulated representation would be rendered unnecessary.<sup>72</sup>

Gandhi wanted India to evolve “True Democracy”<sup>73</sup> and laid down six conditions for its realization in India :

- (i) Satyagraha expressed through the Charkha ;
- (ii) Growth of village industries ;
- (iii) Primary education through handicrafts ;
- (iv) Removal of untouchability ;
- (v) Communal harmony ; and
- (vi) Non-violent organisation of labour.

He was categorical in his belief that the “constructive programme” could build the solid foundations of “Non-violent Responsible Government”<sup>74</sup> because that would provide the stable social, economic and educational basis of democracy.

After the achievement of Independence, Gandhi stressed, once more, service more than political power. He did not favour the clamour of political contestants for votes. He demonstrated his

71 *Young India*, January 29, 1925.

72 *Ibid.*, July 2, 1931.

73 *Harjan*, May 18, 1940.

74 *Ibid.*, June 10, 1939. (Capitals inserted by the author).

signal spirit of self-abnegation by not claiming any post for himself. He allowed his lieutenants and followers to shoulder the burdens of power. He had always wanted the renunciation of power politics and pleaded for pure selfless service to the people. After Independence, he visualized the necessity of an organisation that would not concern itself with power politics but teach people to use their franchise intelligently. During the month of December, 1947, Gandhi discussed these problems with the Constructive Workers. He felt that if the social workers sought no advantage for themselves and were only content with service to the people, the latter would willingly render them voluntary obedience and even call them to shoulder the responsibility of political power.

## 6. Decentralization : Village Republics

One of the basic concepts in the political and economic philosophy of Gandhi is decentralization. He stood for the thorough decentralization of political power and economic production. Gandhi's attachment to the village community and *panchayat* is evident as early as 1896 in the "Petition to Natal Assembly". Since the time Gandhi wrote the *Hind-Swaraj* in 1908 he had been an advocate of the rehabilitation of village polity and economy. Since 1925, he laid increasing stress on Constructive Program. In the context of modern India, decentralization would be primarily expressed in the development of self-sufficient village communities.<sup>75</sup> The reconstruction of villages alone can be the effective basis of the emancipation of the centres of national energy because, the strength of the political system consists, according to Gandhi, not in the magnification of the state but in the reorganisation of the villages through the practice of the Constructive Program. He wanted India to evolve a decentralized structure of power based on the effective reconstruction of self-reliant and self-sufficient villages. The village organisation was to be based on the principle of constructive social and economic efforts, sacrifice and the abnegation of illegitimate self-interest.

According to Gandhi, India became impoverished when Indian cities became foreign markets and began "to drain the villages dry by dumping cheap and shoddy goods from foreign lands." He felt that there could not be any spirit of moral and cultural dignity and freedom left if villagers were deprived of almost the whole result of their labour.

The political structure of independent India was to be not a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. In the *Panchayat Raj*, the toiling labourer and the rich capitalist would be treated as equal.<sup>76</sup> There was to be the solidarist spirit of mutual interdepen-

<sup>75</sup> *Collected Works*, Vol. I, pp. 93-94. He refers in support of his views to Henry Maine's *village Communities*.

<sup>76</sup> *Harijan*, June 1, 1947.

dence and harmonious co-operation. The communal tensions which were spreading to the rural areas from the towns had to be eliminated. The self-sustained villages were to manage their own affairs. They were not to rely on the help of a central army for defence. They should morally develop themselves to the extent even of having the strength of perishing in the attempt of self-defence.<sup>77</sup> They could also depend on willing help from neighbours or from the world<sup>78</sup>, but the basic point was the cultivation of genuine strength of their own for purpose of defence.

The village *Panchayat* was to conduct the government of the village and was to be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined in one. The Panchayats can only work through the laws of their own making. Public opinion will be the most significant force in the *Panchayat Raj*.

Gandhi accepted the co-operative ideal of a village commonwealth. In his last public document of January 30, 1948, which may be regarded as his political testament, he did specify the processes and institutions for the organisation of the whole country on the line of village panchayats. Gandhi wrote :

“The A.I.C.C. resolves to disband the existing Congress organisation” and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh under the following rules with power to alter them as occasion may demand.

Every *panchayat* of five adult men and women being villagers or village-minded shall form a unit. Two such contiguous *panchayats* shall form a working party under a leader elected from amongst themselves. When there are 100 such *panchayats*, the 50 first grade leaders shall elect from amongst themselves a second grade leader and so on : the first grade leaders meanwhile working under the second grade leader. Parallel groups of 200 *panchayats* shall continue to be formed till they cover the whole of India, each succeeding group of *panchayats* electing second grade leaders after the manner of the first. All second grade leaders shall serve jointly for the whole of India and severally for their respective areas. The second grade leaders may elect whenever they deem necessary from amongst themselves a chief who will, during pleasure,

<sup>77</sup> *Harijan*, July 28, 1946, p. 236.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> It is interesting to contrast the idea of Gandhi with regard to the future of the Congress, in 1931. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, pp. 251-52, point out that he (Nehru) imagined that the Congress would cease to exist after the advent of freedom. Gandhi felt otherwise. His idea was that the Congress should continue but it should pass a self-denying ordinance explicitly laying it down that no Congressmen could accept a paid job under the State. Nehru says that Gandhi wanted the Congress to exercise thereby moral pressure upon the organs of the State.

regulate and command all the groups. As the final formation of provinces or districts is still in a state of flux, no attempt has been made to divide this group of servants into provincial or district councils, and jurisdiction over the whole of India has been established in the group or groups that may have been formed at any given time. It should be noted that this body of servants derive their authority or power from service ungrudgingly and wisely done to their master, the whole of India.

- (i) Every worker shall be a habitual wearer of Khadi made from self-spun yarn or certified by the A.I.S.A. (All-India Spinners' Association) and must be a teetotaller. If a Hindu, he must have abjured untouchability in any shape or form in his own person or in his family. He must be a believer in the ideal of inter-communal unity with equal respect and regard for all religious and equality of opportunity and status for all, irrespective of race, creed or sex.
- (ii) He shall come in personal contact with every villager within his jurisdiction.
- (iii) He shall enroll and train workers from amongst the villagers and keep a register of all these.
- (iv) He shall keep a record of his work from day to day.
- (v) He shall organise the villages so as to make them self-contained and self-supporting through their agriculture and handicrafts.
- (vi) He shall educate the village-folk in sanitation and hygiene and take all measures for prevention of ill-health and disease among them.
- (vii) He shall organise the education of village-folk from birth to death along the lines of *Nayee Talim*, in accordance with the policy laid down by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.
- (viii) He shall see that those whose names are missing on the statutory voters' rolls are duly entered therein.
- (ix) He shall encourage those who have not yet acquired the legal qualification to acquire it, for getting the right of franchise.
- (x) For the above purposes and others to be added from time to time, he shall train and fit himself in accordance with the rules laid down by the Sangh for the due performance of duty."

Thus Gandhi visualized the gradual replacement of the top-heavy parliamentary structure by a co-operative organisation of self-managing village republics. Besides supporting the co-operative

organisation of self-sufficient village, as an antidote to the evils of centralization and urbanism, he would also emphasise the possibilities of buttressing the democratic structure by the promotion of social and economic associations. He had blessed the workings of the All-India Spinners' Association<sup>80</sup> and the Gandhi Sewa Samgha. Furthermore, he does not relish the centralizing role of the political party in the political structure. Gandhi, however, had no definite scheme of occupational representation.

The association of the village republics which Gandhi visualizes is based on a territorial pattern because the villages are not functional associations but territorial entities. He does not clarify the role of functional associations of diverse types in his scheme of village federalization.

He believed that urbanization was one of the important factors responsible for the growing poverty of India. He regarded the towns of India as the agents of an exploitationist ruthless foreign imperialism. In a speech to the students at Eton in 1931, Gandhi condemned the Indian cities as "blotting sheets of London and other western cities, which consciously prey upon villages and share with you in exploiting them by becoming the commission agents of England."<sup>81</sup> The advance of western civilization in India resulted in the growth of big cities. These huge concentrations of population were immensely different from the *Pura*, *Nigama* and *Nagara* referred to in the ancient and medieval literature of the country. The baneful political and social impact of the newly arisen urban centres was great and hence several thinkers in India pleaded for a restoration of the simple system of the villages as a counterpoise to the evils of urbanism. If the vast labouring population of India living in the villages could be made to harness all energies for the realization of the Constructive Program, then alone India could be saved the dependence upon foreign capital. Thus through his schemes of village reconstruction Gandhi stressed the building up of India's own resources. "We would be able to produce those things that the world would voluntarily and willingly take from us." Lenin also spoke against the excesses of urbanization. Gandhi's stress on the revival and reconstruction of rural communities was suited to the Indian conditions and the comprehensive agrarianism is a testimony to his realistic social and political approach.

The only way, according to Gandhi, to emancipate the nation from its age-long torpor and frustration was to make the villages of India self-sufficient and self-reliant through the decentralized structure of village republics. Thus alone could the villagers also develop their intellectual powers and could acquire the social economic conscious-

<sup>80</sup> *Harijan*, December 12, 1938.

<sup>81</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *To the Students*, (Hingorani ed.), p. 263.

ness necessary for "the contemplated non-violent society of the future."<sup>82</sup> A non-violent society would be one based on villages and not on a factory civilization. Even a ferocious tyrant like Adolf Hitler "could not devastate even hundred thousand non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process."<sup>83</sup> Thus, according to Gandhi, decentralization was a technic for revolutionizing the psychology of the people and for building a more perfect society.

This deep attachment to the concept of decentralization indicates the radical and fundamental nature of Gandhi's theory of democracy because he wants to begin the reform at the bottom. According to him, the common masses have to feel the thrill of participation in the exercise of power. Thus alone can the universal will of the people become a reality.

A small self-sufficient village community can certainly be an important force for the strengthening of individual personality by the creation of a centre round which there can be the crystallization of the sentiments of organic density. Big urban establishments generate a sense of *anomie* or normlessness because they produce a frustrating sense of void and unbearable individualism. They even loosen the moral fibres of man. But in small communities, active and creative participation in self-government or Swaraj is possible because genuine civil and social participation is facilitated. Aristotle had also stressed the necessity of *Koinonia* and friendship for the *polis*. Only in small groups can there be effective opportunities for love, affection, interpersonal communication and consensus. Hence the exaltation of the peasant, in the small village, in Gandhi is not a reactionary trend in support of a patriarchal society.

In the days of modern industrial megalopolitanism, Gandhi's stress on rural revival through decentralization did sound anachronistic to several critics. Some regarded it as a medieval feature. Some regarded it a going back to the days of primitive tribal economy and polity. But there is truth in his emphasis on panchayat raj and decentralization. Centralization is definitely a technic of regimentation and authoritarianism. If not the essence, decentralization can, at least, be considered a fundamental feature or an accompanying and constant phenomenon of democracy. Concentration of power amounts to the deprivation of the vast majority from all exercise of authority and thus results in the neutralization of liberty. Hence there have been occasional movements both in U.S.A. and in Britain for extending decentralization as a revitalizing force for democracy. If

82 Referring to the democracy and non-violence of the village republics, Gandhi pointed out : "... perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government."

83 *Harijan*, November 4, 1939.

democracy is to be the institutional mechanism for the concrete expression of the sovereignty of the people and if the consent of the governed has to be the justification of the exercise of political power, decentralization is bound to be a necessary element of democracy. The local authorities are to be not mere branches of the central government exercising delegated powers but in the Gandhian scheme they are to be almost autonomous republics. Gandhi was sanguine enough to believe that voluntary co-operation between villages would produce self-reliance, self-sufficiency and will be a genuine basis for village autonomy. By stressing the deep import of the co-operative commonwealth built on the organisation of the village republics, Gandhi has championed the cause of the rural countryside. He was opposed to considering villages as backward relics of a primitive economy and society. To him, villages were the soul of India and he wanted them to be creative forces in the advancement of the country. Hence it is not correct to represent Gandhi as the advocate of a decadent agrarian-feudal society simply because he has emphasised rural rehabilitation and reconstruction. Gandhi felt that a perfect democracy based upon individual freedom could be based only on the foundation of the Panchayat. Hence he stood for villagism. This cry of village rehabilitation represents the sensitive reaction of the simple soul of India wounded and injured by the gigantic materialistic and imperial civilization of the Occident. Only time will decide as to which one—Gandhi's plea for simple ruralism or the colossal military preparation for the nuclear degradations of humanity which may even lead to the midnight of the threatened dark ages, is the retrograde step in human civilization.

The advocacy of the significance of rural civilization represents a Platonic and a Rousseauic element in the Gandhian sociology. Although it is true that Plato and Rousseau were not referring to the exact counterpart of the Indian village, yet, certainly, they were advocating the importance of the small community. According to Rousseau, bigness is the enemy of self-government. Jefferson<sup>84</sup> and Wilhelm Von Humboldt were also advocates of agrarianism. The return to rural simplicity would have, according to Gandhi, solid advantages. It would eliminate the evils of competitive industrialism, because it would solidify co-operation and would prevent the horrors of future class-war.

But while appreciating Gandhi's deep and urgent concern for the spiritual, economic and political uplift of the villages, I cannot help feeling that he was not mindful of the complex organisational aspects of the problem. He talks of "a republic of every village in India."<sup>85</sup>

84 Aldous Huxley, in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *M. Gandhi*, (2nd ed.), p.406, compares the Gandhian scheme of decentralization to Jefferson's scheme of dividing the countries into wards and of making the wards "little republics."

85 M. K. Gandhi, *Sarvodaya*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1954), p. 68.

But how are the seven lacs of village republics to be organised ? How is the channel of organisation, feedback and communication to run ? What will be the agencies for the settlement of grievances, and for the control of entropy in the political system and for the co-ordination of agencies dealing with matters of common concern ? On the basis of historical experiences it may be said that unconcern with the organisational side of the seven lacs of villages may repeat, once more, the vices of disintegration and disruption that have been the constant curse of India. In fairness to Gandhi, it may be said, however, that as a prophet he was concerned with stressing some profound insights. He did not have the time to go into the details of the organisation, administration, financial system and communication—process of the “oceanic circle”<sup>86</sup> of India constituted by village republics.

### 7. Gandhi's Philosophy of the State

(a) *The Actual State as an Engine of Violence.* Like Tolstoy, Gandhi regards the state as the organisation of violence. While Marx and Engels regard the state as the agent of the exploiting classes, Tolstoy and Gandhi consider it as the engine of violence. Gandhi was the protagonist of a divine kingdom on earth and hence, necessarily, he was repelled by the resort to force by political institutions. He has in mind the ultimate vision of the perfection of mankind and hence he is hostile to the modern state which, to him, is a mechanical structure representing organised and concentrated violence.<sup>87</sup> We find, thus, that like Gumplovicz, Bluntschli and Franz Oppenheimer as well as the anarchists, Gandhi regards the state as the organisation of force. Unlike St. Augustine and other Christian political thinkers, he did not regard political force as the divinely appointed punishment or remedy for the sins of man. Nor did he regard social and political associations and the state as the actualization and objectivization of universal reason or the revelations of an all-pervasive Spirit. He is not a conservative historicist so as to identify the existing institutional mechanism with the realized realm of free-will. Neither does he regard the state as being almost the second nature of the individual in the external world. Nor is he an exponent of the servile cult of state omnipotence.

There is no element of moral spontaneity in the state. Hence Gandhi had no love for the organised institutions of political power. He accepted, instead, the worth of the plasticity and spontaneity generated by non-violence. The compulsiveness of the commands of the state<sup>88</sup> leads to the destruction of the plasticity and subtlety of personality. Hence Gandhi said :

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Sarvodaya, op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>88</sup> In an article entitled “The Right of Civil Disobedience”, *Young India*, (January 5, 1922), *Satyagraha*, p. 174, Gandhi makes a distinction between (a) a state that is willing to listen to the voice of public opinion, and (b) an autocratic state.

"I look upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress."

Hence against the proclaimed generality and objectivity of the laws of British Indian state, Gandhi had stood up as the champion of the sanctity of subjective conscience.

It is possible to note down certain events and factors which might have generated hostility towards the state, in Gandhi's mind. (i) The brutalities perpetrated by the South African government of Natal upon the poor defenceless Zulus in June 1906, were indeed shocking and even horrifying. Gandhi says in his *Autobiography* that it was "no war but a man-hunt." (ii) The betrayals by Jan Christian Smuts during the South African Satyagraha movement in 1907 and 1913 were rebuffs to Gandhi. General Smuts failed in 1908 to make good his pledge that the Asiatic Registration Act of 1907 would be repealed if Indians consented to register voluntarily. In 1913, he failed to make good the pledge he had made to Gokhale. (iii) The atrocities committed by the British imperialistic power in India in 1919 and earlier, turned Gandhi into a rebel. In the arrogance of imperialistic irresponsible coercive power Chelmsford, Dyer, Reading and other representatives of the empire trampled upon the demands of the people. In his trial speech of 1922, Gandhi maintained the view that the British government and law in India were used for "exploitation of the masses." "The law itself in this country has been used to serve the foreign exploiter." It could be legitimately inferred that from these experiences in South Africa and India, Gandhi came to regard not a particular government as such but the entire structure of the state with deep suspicion and hostility.

Gandhi's hostility to the violence of the state may also possibly be due, in part, to the influence of Tolstoy on him. Tolstoy wrote : "This superstition resembles exactly the religious one, and consists in affirming, that, besides the duties of man to man, there are still more important duties towards an imaginary being, which theologians call God, and political science the State." Gandhi's views, while they do not have any significant point in common with the ideas of Max Stirner and Bakunin, were influenced by Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1891), wherein the Russian writer denounced not only war between nations but all manifestations of pugnacity. He felt that the governments which employ the army are immoral and they serve the interests of the exploiting classes to the detriment of the poor and the needy. Tolstoy felt delighted in quoting Herzen's ridicule of modern government as "Chenghiz Khan with telegraphs". He denounced the fourfold techniques—(i) intimidation, (ii) corruption, (iii) hypnotization of the people, and (iv) militarization—employed by the state engine to buttress its power. He regarded 'the religion

of patriotism' as a barbarizing, perverse and evil slogan and felt that to preach unconditional obedience to the state was a pagan doctrine absolutely antithetical to the Christian notion of the unimpeachable superiority of the divine law or love. He definitely felt that there could not be a Christian state. Christianity based on love and the state based on violence are antitheses. Those countries where the claim is made of their having a state based on religion are only the exemplification of sheer power rid of spiritual sanction. The disparate conjunction of the temporal and the spiritual, necessarily, results in the death of the latter and the triumph of the former.

In criticism of Gandhi it may, however, be noted that not all state coercion is evil. For example, the coercive power of the state has been used for common good in the following cases :

- (i) in suppressing individual and group coercion,
- (ii) in the preservation of internal and external security and in the maintenance of the system of contracts, and
- (iii) in implementing the general will undeterred by the recalcitrance of the dissentient members.

These solid contributions of the state make it essential that a more thorough historical and sociological study of the nature of the state be done than Gandhism has provided.

Gandhi's trenchant hostility is to the coercive apparatus of the modern imperial state. It may be argued that if the state were rooted in community-consensus and tried to realize the common social and economic good, he might have toned down the vehemence of his attack.

*(b) Gandhi's Opposition to the Hegelian and Austinian Theory of Sovereignty.* Gandhi would be thoroughly opposed to the Hegelian and Austinian concepts of law and sovereignty. Positive law and the sovereign political structure, due to their ultimate reliance on violence, authoritarian dictates and compulsive commands, do not help the genuine realization of the system of individual rights. Gandhi's conscience revolted against the sovereignty of the despotic imperial state. Sovereignty is the magnification of political power, howsoever clothed in legal terminology it might be. The glorification of the sovereignty of the state was a challenge to the moral right of man to shape independently his own destiny. Hence any concept of the exaltation of the absolute, uncontrolled and illimitable power of the state was, according to Gandhi, an attack on the moral fibre of civilization. He would have agreed that the purified, regenerate will of the community can alone be the sovereign.

Against the absolutist doctrines of Hobbes, Austin and Hegel, Gandhi appeared as the spokesman of the moral sovereignty of the people. His opposition to the concept of sovereignty as propounded by Hobbes, Austin and Hegel would, possibly, have been based

on three grounds. First, as a devout theist, Gandhi regards spiritual authority to have a higher validity than the temporal authority of the political ruler. No ruler could claim to set himself up against God. Secondly, as the founder of the science of Satyagraha, Gandhi preached the right of inner conscience to oppose an unjustified law, statute, order, decree, ordinance or proclamation of the state. Thirdly, against the organised power of the legal sovereign, Gandhi stood as the prophet of the moral authority of the people.

(c) *The Third Best Ideal or Swaraj in India : Distinction between Ideal Society and Swaraj.* The political goals of Gandhi can be stated to be three :—

- (i) Immediate Swaraj for India : More or less on the lines of western nationalism and representative democracy.
- (ii) Non-violent State : Marked by the growth of Decentralization (Village Republics) internally and synchronistic with the development of Internationalism. Slowly the non-violent state will be transformed into Pure Democracy and Enlightened Anarchy.
- (iii) *Ramaraj or Divine Raj.*

In an article in the *Young India*<sup>89</sup>, Gandhi draws a distinction between the ideal society and Swaraj. In the ideal society, there will be no railways, no hospitals, no machinery, no army and navy and no laws and law courts. But he emphatically states that under Swaraj these five entities and institutions will continue to function. Under Swaraj, laws and law courts will be the custodians of people's liberty and not the bureaucratic instruments of oppression. He visualised that in the future independent Indian State, soldiers will form a "national militia" and would be used not for offensive but only for defensive and protective purposes.<sup>90</sup> It may appear a bit surprising that Gandhi should write that under the Swaraj government, soldiers as national militia, will have a voice in the moulding of the affairs of the nation. In the Swaraj polity, the police will be retained but its character would be changed. Gandhi writes :

"The police of my conception will, however, be of a wholly different pattern from the present-day force. Its ranks will be composed of believers in non-violence. They will instinctively render them every help and through mutual co-operation they will easily deal with the ever-decreasing

89 *Young India*, March 9, 1922.

90 M.K. Gandhi, "Soldiers", *Young India*, October 27, 1921, *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, I, p. 24.

disturbances. The police force will have some kind of arms but they will be rarely used, if at all. In fact, the policemen will be reformers. Their police work will be confined to robbers and dacoits. Quarrels between labour and capital and strikes will be few and far between in a non-violent state, because the influence of the non-violent majority will be so great as to command the respect of the principal elements in society. Similarly there will be no room for communal disturbances."

The Indian Swaraj polity was to be a parliamentary government at least for the time being. There would be a central authority constituted on representative basis. The Swaraj government would be based on popular consent of the largest number of the adult population both male and female. But sometimes Gandhi added some reservations to the concept of universal popular franchise and said that the central power would be based on "universal suffrage exercised by a disciplined and politically intelligent electorate." This latter concept is more qualitative in orientation while the notion of adult suffrage is decidedly more quantitative. He wrote :

"I would be deeply distressed if on every conceivable occasion every one of us were to be a law unto oneself and to scrutinize in golden scales every action of our future National Assembly. I would surrender my judgment in most matters to national representatives taking particular care in making my choice of such representatives. I know that in no other manner would a democratic government be possible for one single day."<sup>91</sup>

In an article in the *Harijan*<sup>92</sup>, Gandhi indicated his ideas regarding the "Indian Governor" after independence. He was to base his life on the maxim of plain living and high thinking. He was to be a teetotaller, absolutely removed from caste, creed or colour prejudice and devoted to hand-spinning as a necessary ingredient of bread labour. He should speak the language of the province wherein he may be posted as governor and Hindustani. He must not have expensive furniture, and "must dwell in a cottage accessible to all." These ideas indicate Gandhi's absolute devotion to the concept of a rural civilization for independent India. He would not have sanctioned the craze for splendid American-type buildings that has infected the policy-makers in this poor country.

(d) *Non-Violence and State : The Second Best Ideal.* In spite of his opposition to the coercive state and its sovereignty, Gandhi did not contemplate the deliberate destruction of the state machine but believed in the final elimination of the coercive state by increasing

91 Quoted in H.T. Majumdar, *M. Gandhi*, p. 106.

92 *Harijan*, August 24, 1947.

observance of non-violence in political action. Gandhi had firm faith in the inevitable non-violent society of the future.. He regarded violence as contrary to the spirit of India and was of the view that in time the spirit of violence would be extinct. He writes :

"The world of to-morrow will be, must be, a society based on non-violence. It may seem a distant goal, an impracticable Utopia. But it is not in the least unobtainable since it can be worked for here and now. An individual can adopt the way of life of the future—the non-violent way—with-out having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can do it why cannot whole groups of individual? Whole nations? Men often hesitate to make a beginning because they feel that the objective cannot be achieved in its entirety. This attitude of mind is precisely our greatest obstacle to progress—an obstacle that each man, if he only wills it, can clear away . . . In that world there will be a faith in God greater and deeper than ever in the past. The very existence of the world in a broad sense depends on religion."<sup>93</sup>

He believed in the eventual realisability of a non-violent state. He once opined that possibly the Mauryan King Asoka presided over a non-violent state. He wrote : "It is claimed that a State can be based on non-violence, i.e., it can offer non-violent resistance against a world combination based on armed force. Such a state was Asoka's."<sup>94</sup>

According to Gandhi, the non-violent state must be based on the willing allegiance of an intelligent body of citizens.<sup>95</sup> The government in such a state will represent the will and ideals of the overwhelming majority of the people. "If it is expressed non-violently, it cannot be a majority of one but nearer 99 against 1 in a hundred."<sup>96</sup> Gandhi propounded the concept of a progressively non-violent state.<sup>97</sup> He wrote : "I believe that a State can be adminis-

93 M.K. Gandhi, quoted in C. Catlin, *In the Path of M. Gandhi*, pp. 322-23.

94 *Harijan*, May 12, 1946.

95 M.K. Gandhi, "Unseemly if True", *Harijan*, August 9, 1942 :

"Self-government necessarily means government by the free and intelligent will of the people. I add the word 'intelligent' because, I hope that India will be predominantly non-violent."

96 When Gandhi says that in the Swaraj of his conception there would be no criminals and thieves (*Satyagraha*, p. 351), he is referring to the progressively non-violent state and not to the Swaraj which was the goal of the Congress.

97 With reference to the role of the army in the progressively non-violent state Gandhi wrote : "A non-violent army acts unlike armed men, as well in times of peace as of disturbances. They would be constantly engaged in constructive activities that make riots impossible. Theirs will be the duty of seeking occasions for bringing warring communities together, carrying on peace propaganda, engaging in activities that would bring and keep them in touch with every single person, male and female, adult and child, in their parish or division. Such an army should be ready to cope with any emergency, and in

(Contd.)

tered on a non-violent basis if the vast majority of the people are non-violent. So far as I know, India is the only country which has a possibility of being such a State. I am conducting my experiment in that faith."<sup>98</sup> But as a realist, he was not very hopeful of the immediate acceptance of non-violence as a principle of state policy.<sup>99</sup> In August, 1946, in a discussion with Shankarrao Deo, Gandhi expressed hope that if a state without a government could ever come into being it would be in India because it is the only country where the attempt has been made.<sup>100</sup>

(e) *The Religious Anarchism of Gandhi or The Concept of Enlightened Anarchy: Transition from the Second Best to the Absolute Best Ideal.* The final concept in Gandhian political thought is Ramraj or the kingdom of God on earth. In terms of western political science this ideal can be more concretely expressed as enlightened anarchy. In this condition coercion is replaced by pure good will. But although a believer in the perfection of the community as a moral organism, Gandhi was not for the immediate ending of the state power. The increasing moulding of the state according to the canons of *Ahimsa* should be the immediate goal although the ultimate aim is philosophical and religious anarchism.

It is true that sometimes Gandhi has used the word anarchist to mean the terrorist.<sup>101</sup> Gandhi says in his *Satyagraha in South Africa* (p. 231) that he composed *Hind-Swaraj* in November, 1908, to meet the argument of the "many Indian anarchists" whom he met in England in course of his second deputation to that country. Furthermore, in his famous speech at the inauguration of the Banaras Hindu University on February 4, 1916, Gandhi said :

"We may foam, we may fret, we may resent, but let us not forget that India of today in her impatience has produced an army of anarchists. I myself am an anarchist, but of another type. But there is a class of anarchists amongst us, and if I was able to reach this class, I would say to them that their anarchism has no room in India, if India is to conquer the conqueror. It is a sign of fear... I honour

order to still the frenzy of mobs should risk their lives in numbers sufficient for the purpose. A few hundred, may be a few thousand, such spotless deaths will once for all put an end to the riots. Surely a few hundred young men and women giving themselves deliberately to mob fury will be any day a cheap and braver method of dealing with such madness than the display and use of the police and the military." —(*Harijan*, March 26, 1938).

<sup>98</sup> *Harijan*, April 13, 1940.

<sup>99</sup> An American questioner asked Gandhi if Satyagraha could become the instrument of a sovereign Indian authority after independence. Gandhi frankly stated, in his reply, entitled "The Future", *Harijan*, April 13, 1940 : "I fear that the chances of non-violence being accepted as a principle of state policy are very slight, so far as I can see at present."

<sup>100</sup> Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, VII, p. 206.

<sup>101</sup> For the use of the word "anarchy" in the sense of confusion or disruption, see the *Harijan*, June 29, 1940.

the anarchist for his love of the country. I honour him for his bravery in being willing to die for his country ; but I ask him. . .is killing honourable ? . . I deny it.”<sup>102</sup>

But at other times he means by anarchy the elimination of coercive governmental political power based on the automatic operations of dominance. Gandhi wrote :

“Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy.<sup>103</sup> In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state therefore there is no political power because there is no state. But the ideal is never fully realized in life.”

He also used to quote Thoreau’s statement that that government is the best which governs the least.<sup>104</sup> He wrote : “That state is perfect and non-violent where the people are governed the least. The nearest approach to purest anarchy would be a democracy based on non-violence.”<sup>105</sup>

Max Stirner regarded the concepts of duty and sacred task as a superstition. Benjamin Tucker, like Max Stirner, was a gigantic egoist. Michael Bakunin had organised a secret brotherhood for promoting his anarchist ideas. His technics included activities of small secret groups which were to inspire universal rebellion for the destruction of the state which was to be substituted by a free federation of autonomous associations. Bakunin preaches a war against God and the state. But, unlike him Gandhi was not an anarchist of the virulent type although he castigates the evils of modern industrial capitalist civilization. He did not teach the immediate neutralization of the state by violence. He stressed, to the contrary, the cultivation of moral strength and discipline. Gandhi’s concept of truth, non-violence and purity has no parallel in the thought of Max Stirner or Bakunin or Tucker. Kropotkin was an advocate of communal, regional and national federations of production and consumption. Thus, it is clear that both in the

102 *To the Students*, (Hingorani ed.), pp. 43-44.

103 When Gandhi talks of “Enlightened Anarchy”, he means by “enlightened”, not rational growth but moral development. Thus the term “enlightened” should not be construed in the same rational sense as when one talks of French Enlightenment or Enlightened Despotism of eighteenth century Europe.

104 Thoreau was opposed to the legal mechanism of the state. He wrote in his *Civil Disobedience* : “Law never made men a whit more just ; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice. . .The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies.”

105 *Harijan*, July 21, 1940.

matter of formulating an ideal and in the matter of specifying techniques for the realization of that ideal, Gandhi's anarchism is radically different from its western counterpart.

In a letter to W. J. Wybergh,<sup>106</sup> Gandhi says that he did not think Tolstoy ever believed that the entire world would be ever able to live in a state of "philosophical anarchy". Like all world-teachers, Tolstoy also, in Gandhi's opinion, means to stress the loyalty to one's conscience. Every one has to be "his own master", and seek the kingdom of God within himself. Such a person is "superior to all government" and for him there is no governmental power that "can control him without his sanction." It is clear that in this letter, written in 1910, Gandhi does not contemplate any large-scale social organisation on the anarchical pattern but interprets Tolstoy as a sixteenth-century French Monarchomach writer inculcating the superiority of religious (moral in the case of Tolstoy and Gandhi) authority to the organised political superior.

Because Gandhi preached resistance to unjustified law and advocated no-rent campaigns, hence the Indian conservatives and liberals regarded him as an anarchist. But Gandhi should be regarded as a religious anarchist, and not as a violent collectivist anarchist. Anarchism, to Gandhi, was never, a negative plan and formula. He felt that obedience to moral laws would slowly but certainly render unnecessary, and even useless, any reliance on the external mechanism of the public administration of a sovereign state. Thus the primary emphasis in Gandhian thought is not on the deliberate and violent destruction of the state machine, as in some schools of western anarchism, but on truth and non-violence which alone can be the basis of the enrichment and enhancement of the moral personality of man. Hence Gandhi wrote : "A society organised and run on the basis of complete non-violence would be the purest anarchy."<sup>107</sup>

G.N. Dhawan, in his book, *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, says : "The ideal society is, according to Gandhiji, the stateless democracy, the state of enlightened anarchy where social life has become so perfect as to be self-regulated."<sup>108</sup> But to talk of "stateless democracy" is a contradiction in terms from the standpoint of political science, because democracy is itself a form of government. It is possible to conceive of a reformed democracy but, howsoever conceived, democracy must remain a form of government. So long a democracy subsists, there is bound to be a government and a state.

Haridas Majumdar, is absolutely mistaken in his view that

<sup>106</sup> Dated May 10, 1910, *Collected Works*, Vol. X, p. 249.

<sup>107</sup> *Harijan*, July 21, 1940.

<sup>108</sup> G. N. Dhawan, *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, (2nd ed.), p. 318.

"Gandhi had nothing in common with anarchism."<sup>109</sup> His arguments are twofold. First, the Indian National Congress, under Gandhi, was "like a state within the state". It appointed dictators between 1930 to 1934 and Gandhi imposed strict discipline upon his followers. Secondly, Gandhi rebuked the government of the day for failing to do this or that for the masses, implying thereby that he had a functional and positive conception of state. Majumdar has absolutely failed to grasp the significance of Gandhi's unreconciled opposition to the modern state because it was concentrated violence. Furthermore, Gandhi's *Ramraj* would be based on a negation of the legal power of the state. Hence there are definite anarchist elements in Gandhian thought. It is very true that *Ahimsa* as a spiritual force has no parallel in the anarchist philosophy of Bakunin and Kropotkin. Furthermore, while Gandhi was to a great extent, a Vaishnava theist, Bakunin was hurling furious vitriolics against God. Hence Gandhi should be regarded as a religious anarchist, but an anarchist none-the-less. Therefore when Majumdar says that Gandhi believed in the efficient functioning of the state machinery as an agency for social change,<sup>110</sup> he is trying to interpret the Spencerian Gandhi in terms of the American pragmatic liberalism of Dewey.

## 8. Internationalism

(a) *From Nationalism to Internationalism.* Gandhi was intensely attached to the concept of Indian nationalism. But he was also an internationalist and always emphasised his role as a citizen of the world. He was a great national leader but he was also unsurpassed in modern times as a lover of humanity. In Gandhi, despite his nationalist preoccupations the dominant concepts were, always, truth, non-violence and purity and, hence, as a believer in positive love for man he believed in internationalism and in the essential unity of man. The South African and Indian politics had been the laboratories in which he "experimented" with his formulae of truth and non-violence which are indeed universal values. There is, thus, indeed, a supreme humanitarian standpoint in Gandhi. He was a great fighter for Swaraj but they would consider human welfare to be a matter of greater concern. He fought against the British empire but he loved the British people. He considered no person to be an enemy because beyond the sovereignty of the nation he looked to the categorical imperative of human brotherhood. He absolutely believed in a union of hearts—*homonoia*—of all men and women of the world.

Gandhi's internationalism was only a sociological and political application of the great norm of *Ahimsa* which means universal

<sup>109</sup> H.T. Majumdar, *Mahatma Gandhi*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1963), p. 153.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 153-54.

non-hatred and non-violence. Buddha and St. Francis showed the tenderest care for the meanest creatures of the world. Their love extended also to the animal kingdom. Gandhi, like them, believed in the doctrine of absolute and universal compassion for all living beings. A believer in God naturally has the feeling of identity with all creatures because all are the creations of God. Gandhi was never tired of repeating that men could receive divine grace and affection only if they loved their brethren. He said : "We are all tarred with the same brush ; we are all members of the vast human family." Hence love of the human kind was only an aspect of his *ahimsa*, and internationalism is a concrete means to realise at the political level, the universal love for humanity.

But Gandhi wanted that before cosmopolitanism and internationalism could become a reality, those countries which were still suffering under feudal overlordship and colonial dependence should have the political freedom to determine their own future. He, therefore, cried for a halt to the nefarious game of imperial "gangsterism" among nations. Nationalism, thus, though only a stage, was a very important one towards the realization of internationalism. He asked : "How is this vast mass of humanity to be afame in the cause of world deliverance, unless and until it has touched and felt freedom." India had first to be free before she could co-operate on terms of equality with other nations. Hence, it is clear that Gandhi's romantic conception of the soul of a nation, as discussed earlier in the analysis of his theory of civilization, although somewhat comparable to the *Volksgeist* of the German writers, was not meant as the psychological support to virulent national chauvinism but was only a means to extol the soul of a people against the effective organisations and combinations of imperialistic powers that may attempt to suppress rising nationalism. The units that could form any international union should do that from their own will and this implied the previous attainment of national sovereignty by them. Hence Gandhi wrote : "It is impossible for one to be internationalist without being a nationalist. Internationalism is possible only when nationalism becomes a fact, i.e., when peoples belonging to different countries have organised themselves and are able to act as one man."

In an obvious criticism of the League of Nations based on the concept of the great powers' predominance, Gandhi had written<sup>111</sup> that an international league could really exist "only when all the nations, big or small, composing it are fully independent."

Nationalism would not mark the climax of political evolution. It was not an end but a stage. He, hence, stood only for a nationalism that was "health-giving, religious and therefore humanitarian.

"He felt that Indian nationalism should be a step towards internationalism and human unity. He was also of the opinion that India's freedom could be preserved only if there was "good will towards the whole of the human family."

He wanted India to be a free nation in order that she could sacrifice herself for the service of mankind.<sup>112</sup> Hence he wrote :

"I want the freedom of my country so that other countries may learn something from my free country, so that the resources of my country may be utilized for the benefit of mankind. Just as the cult of patriotism teaches us today that the individual has to die for the family, the family has to die for the village, the village for the country, even so a country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world. My love, therefore, or nationalism or my idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be the whole of the country may die, so that the human race may live. There is no room for race hatred there. Let that be our nationalism."

Nationalism was thus not the pinnacle of human endeavours but was only a stage in the political evolution of man. Through national consolidations it was possible to get over the obstacles of caste, group and local prejudices, conflicts and struggles. Thus nationalism could become a means to political and psychological integration. Once, local and sectional hatreds had been consumed by the fire of nationalism, the time would naturally come when the nation would sacrifice itself for the good of the world. Gandhi wrote : "My patriotism includes the good of mankind in general. Therefore, my service of India includes the service of humanity. The whole scheme for the liberation of India is based upon the development of internal strength. It is a plan of self-purification"<sup>113</sup> He wanted that Indian nationalism should mean the development of the national strength of India so that renovated India could serve mankind. Hence there could be no place for the pursuit of national interest to the detriment of the legitimate rights of other nations, according to the tenets of Gandhian foreign policy, which believed that the destiny of India lay not in militarization but in the realization of the noble mission of friendship and peace in the world.<sup>114</sup> Thus we see that Gandhism teaches the conception of transcendence of narrow, exclusive, aggressive and chauvinistic nationalism and affirms the fundamental proposition that one's good consists in the

<sup>112</sup> Gandhi wrote : "It is not nationalism that is evil, it is the narrowness, selfishness, exclusiveness which is the bane of modern nations which is evil. Each wants to profit at the expense of, and rise on, the ruin of the other. Indian nationalism has struck a different path. It wants to organise itself or to find full self-expression for the benefit and service of humanity at large."

<sup>113</sup> Quoted in D.G. Tendulkar & Others (ed.), *Gandhi, op. cit.*, p. 385.

<sup>114</sup> *Harijan*, November 17, 1946.

good of mankind.<sup>115</sup> Gandhi's conception of internationalism, thus, is an effective theoretical counterbalance to the almost blind adherence to the cult of national patriotism and absolute sovereignty which we find in Hegelianism, and fascism. Thus if on the one side he was a trenchant critic of western imperialism and a fighter for "purna Swaraj", he would refuse to regard the nation-state as the final category in the political evolution of man. His quest for non-violence would teach him the harmonization of swaraj and swadeshi with the greater good of mankind. He definitely said, "My patriotism is subservient to my religion."

(b) *World Federation.* Gandhi, like a political Utopian, visualized a plan of human unity to be realized by the federal organisation of friendly interdependent states. He had a great devotion to the noble goal of international co-operation and universal harmony, because, according to him, not to believe in the possibility of "permanent peace" amounts to disbelief in the "godliness of human nature". Hence he wanted that permanent peace should be secured. He also pleaded for world order and world federation. He wrote :

"Isolated independence is not the goal of the world states. It is voluntary interdependence. The better mind of the world desires today not absolutely independent states warring one against another, but a federation of friendly interdependent states. The consummation of that event may be far off. I want to make no grand claim for our country. But I see nothing grand or impossible about our expressing our readiness for universal interdependence rather than independence. I desire the ability to be totally independent without asserting the independence."<sup>116</sup>

In a note addressed to Maurice Frydman on 28th July, 1942, Gandhi had asserted his faith in a federally organised world-state.

"I have your letters. You still misunderstand me. I told you that I was at one with you and that I was trying to take the Congress and everybody towards world federation. I told you that if it ever comes, it will come through Sevagram or the Sevagram way. I want Free India, too, for that purpose. If I can get freedom for India through non-violent means, power of non-violence is firmly established, empire idea dissolves and the World-State takes its place in which all the states of the world are free and equal, no state has its military. There may be a world police to keep order in the absence of universal belief in non-violence."

On July 4, 1947, at a prayer speech Gandhi visualised that "if

<sup>115</sup> There is, thus, no basis for G. Bolton's (*The Tragedy of Gandhi*, op. cit., p. 172) view that Gandhi accepted "Nationalism without cosmopolitanism".

<sup>116</sup> Quoted in D.G. Tendulkar et al (ed.), *Gandhiji*, (Bombay, Karnatak Publishing House, 1944), p. 386.

by India's effort such a world federation of free and independent states was brought into being, the hope of the kingdom of God, otherwise called Ram Raj, might legitimately be entertained.”<sup>117</sup>

He agreed that the only condition for the survival of world civilization was the realization of world union under one central governing body composed of representatives of the constituent entities. Most probably, Gandhi had in mind the federal pattern for this central governing body.<sup>118</sup>

Gandhi would like the world government to non-cooperate with the lawless, aggressive and recalcitrant forces. But a world police force may be necessary in the beginning. This police force, under the control of the world authority, would exercise its power only as the last sanction when moral and non-violent sanctions had ceased to have effect.<sup>119</sup> Thus it is clear that absolute unadulterated pacifism is not the Gandhian gospel for the contemporary world.

## 9. Ramrajya or Perfect Society : Absolute Highest Ideal

Gandhi was convinced that stop-gap arrangements will not bring perfection. The mere correction of institutional structure will not suffice for the concrete realization of rights and justice. A formal political change may mean only the change of rulers. Hence besides giving his suggestions with regard to the concrete social, political and economic problems facing the country, Gandhi also provided us the concept of the utopian Ramraj. He stated that in the ideal state of Ramrajya or the kingdom of God upon earth there will be the sovereignty of the moral authority of the people and the state as a structure of violence would be extinct. The real remedy for man's rampant maladies is to foster the inner moral strength of the people. Hence he formulated the ideal of *Ramrajya* which means the kingdom of love, justice and righteousness.<sup>120</sup> For the realization of *Ramrajya*, self-discipline is of the uppermost significance.<sup>121</sup>

In a speech at Bangalore on May 8, 1915, Gandhi thus exhorted the audience : “...establish a *Ramrajya* in Mysore and have your minister a Vasistha, who will command obedience.”<sup>122</sup> Later on, he said : “By *Ramrajya* I do not mean Hinduraj. I mean by *Ramraj* divine *raj*, the kingdom of God. . . .the ancient ideal of *Ramraj* is one of true democracy. Some years later, in the *Harijan*, January 2, 1937, Ramraj was defined as “sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority.”<sup>123</sup>

117 Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, VIII, p. 40.

118 M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, June 8, 1947, (*Sarvodaya*, p. 76). M.K. Gandhi, “To Every Japanese”, *Harijan*, July 26, 1942 : “. . .world federation and brotherhood without which there can be no hope for humanity.”

119 George Catlin, *In the Path of Mahatma Gandhi*, pp. 307-08.

120 M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, May 28, 1931.

121 *Harijan*, November 21, 1936.

122 M. K. Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings*, p. 136.

123 *Harijan*, January 2, 1937.

Rama stands not for any concrete human personality but for the all-pervasive divine spirit.<sup>124</sup> In his earlier writings, nevertheless, Gandhi accepted the historical existence of the ideal represented by Rama the perfect king of Ayodhya. For example, in his presidential address at the Third Kathiawad Political Conference held at Bhavnagar on January 8, 1925, he had said :

"Rama did justice even to a dog. By abandoning his kingdom and living in the forest for the sake of truth, Rama gave to all the kings of the world an object-lesson in noble conduct. By his strict monogamy he showed that a life of perfect self-restraint could be led by a royal householder. He lent splendour to his throne by his popular administration and proved that Ram Rajya was the acme of Swaraj. Rama did not need the very imperfect modern instrument of ascertaining public opinion by counting votes. He had captivated the hearts of the people. He knew public opinion by intuition as it were. The subjects of Rama were supremely happy. Such Rama Rajya is possible even today. The race of Rama is not extinct. In modern times the first Caliphs may be said to have established Rama Rajya. Abu Baker and Hazrat Umar collected revenue running into crores and yet personally they were as good as *fakirs*."<sup>125</sup>

It is surprising that Gandhi should consider the regime of Abu Baker (Caliph from 632-642 A. D.) and Omar (Caliph from 642-644 A. D.) as examples of *Ramrajya*. These two Caliphs led absolutely simple lives, no doubt, but both of them swore by the cult of violence. Omar was a great fighter. It appears that Gandhi might have made such a statement to placate Moslem sentiments. From a perusal of his earlier writings and from the fact that some of the historical personalities like Rama, Abu Baker and Omar who have been regarded by Gandhi as embodying the principles of *Ramrajya* were political rulers, it might be argued that this order of society would also be a condition of political governance, however chastened and refined might it be. But, later on, Gandhi stressed the apolitical character of *Ramrajya* and he meant by *Ramrajya* the notion of a society founded upon spiritual and moral principles.

Gandhian *Ramrajya* is not merely a political and economic ideal but mainly represents the fructification of the moral spirit. In this society there will be the abolition of tensions, conflicts and egoistic interests. This ideal society will be characterized by harmony, co-operation and mutual confidence. Behind social contradictions and national and international tensions, Gandhi traces individual perversities and hence for his *Ramrajya* he wants the intensification

124 *Harijan*, April 28, 1946.

125 M. K. Gandhi, *The Indian States' Problem*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Press, 1941), p. 19.

of the social spirit and moral will. Sympathetic accommodation, non-coercive organisation and spontaneous co-operation will be the characteristic of Ramrajya and petty local patriotism will be replaced, in it, by a broad public spirit and devotion to the ideals of justice, peace and rights. Positive non-violence which implies universalism or "the silken net of love" will provide the social bonds that knit the community together. Ramrajya believes in the realization of universal peace and humanitarian ethics. There is no place, in it, for pugnacity, barbarity and war. In this society lustfulness will be replaced by reverence for the rights of the womenfolk.

Everybody would earn an honest living by the sweat of his brow and there would be no distinction between intellectual and manual labourer. But it will not be a functionally undifferentiated society. Gandhi adhered to the sociology of *Varnas* which prescribes not the abolition of the various *Varnas* but only pleads for the nullification of all social distances, privilege and discrimination. There will be social organisations of the several functions but the entire structure will be characterized by the absence of any pyramidal and vertical polarization and exploitation. Ramrajya will also be a state of economic equality. Gandhi had stated : "There will be no Ramrajya in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat."<sup>126</sup> Hence this ideal society will not accept the ostentations and glamour of civilization and will try to fight inequality in all its virulent and oppressive phases. With the passage of years, Gandhi tended towards the concept of radical equalitarianism and he felt that equal distribution will be a feature leading to the realization of Ramrajya.

The realization of the kingdom of God would depend, basically, on a sincere faith in the Supreme Spirit by millions and the moulding of conduct according to its canons.<sup>127</sup> It is evident that this Ramrajya will be more a society than a state and its social bonds will be more cohesive than the formal bonds of legal organisation. Like Plato and St. Augustine, Gandhi hoped that the principle of divine reason and the divine kingdom should be concretely realized in the world. The theory of Ramrajya amounts to the synthesis of the Augustinian conception of the kingdom of God on earth<sup>128</sup> with the democratic notion of the sovereignty of the people. The Christian philosophers dreamt of a *Civitas Dei* on earth. The eighteenth and nineteenth century political theorists stressed the sovereignty of the people. The notion of Ramrajya provides a synthesis of both. It stresses that the eschatological conception of the kingdom of God should be realized

126 *Harijan*, June 1, 1947.

127 *Harijan*, April 21, 1946.

128 Cf. K. G. Mashruwala (ed.), *Gandhi-Vichara-Dohan*, p. 61, where Ramrajya is regarded as (a) the kingdom of Dharma, (b) ahimsaka swarajya, (c) swarajya, of the people, and (d) the final goal of swarajya.

on this earth and the problems of the mundane world should be solved with the help of a divine idealism. Ramrajya also goes beyond any monarchical orientation and sincerely stresses the supremacy of the good of the people. It may thus be regarded as a synthesis of the Augustinian conception of the divine city and the Rousseauic conception of general will.

The conceptualization of the ideal social order in terms of Ramrajya indicates the synthesis of the traditional and the revolutionary in Gandhi's political leadership. With all his spiritual attainments, Gandhi had a keen and solid sense of political realism. Hence he could go on extending the implications of Ramrajya. He regarded it as the kingdom of God on earth—a concept familiarized by St. Augustine and Tolstoy. He also regarded it as the manifestation of decentralized political and economic power based on pure moral authority. He would have agreed that it was also the highest manifestation of 'enlightened anarchy'—a concept which amounts to the spiritualization of the nineteenth century western philosophy of protest against the bourgeois state and capitalist production. Hence it is absolutely clear that Gandhi's concept of Ramrajya is poles apart from the idealized picture of monarchical polity and Brahmanical social order as painted in the Ramayana of Valmiki. But regardless of the acceptance of the revolutionary notions of divine authority, decentralized democratic organisation and morally enlightened anarchy, Gandhi stuck to the concept of Ramraj for its mighty appeal to the tradition-bound Hindu population. Several times he repeated that by Rama he meant the divine principle, the all-encompassing real, but he refused to dissociate his Rama from the historical associations with Ayodhya, Dasaratha, Sita and Laxman. Stripping the concept of Rama completely from its historical and traditional foundations would have led to the loss of the emotional appeal. Hence, with delightful and deliberate vagueness, Gandhi could formulate a concept that could sometimes be construed by the idealists in terms of philosophical governance, could be interpreted by the radicals as a complete program of stateless, casteless, classless, society based on absolute decentralization, and could also elicit emotional responses from the historical subconscious of the conservative sections. To accentuate, as if, the delightful vagueness, Gandhi would sometimes identify Ramrajya with the Swaraj of the dumb, starved millions and at other times would refer to it as a remote utopia transcending the situational restraints of the immediate future.

## 14

### MAHATMA GANDHI'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

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#### 1. Synthetic Character of Gandhian Political Thought

Gandhi was an idealist believing in the ever-present reality of God. The final and ultimate loyalty is always to God and the divine law. But Gandhi would not feel frustrated if the celestial city was not within the range of proximate realization. He constantly repeated "one step is enough for me." He aspired for divine illumination and the emancipation of the soul. But he was also keenly interested in the mundane world and its activities. Thus Gandhi was a thinking realist but with the touch of the prophet and the mystic in him. He was realistic to foresee that the kingdom of God could not be immediately realized in the world, but he did want that strenuous endeavours should be made for the remaking of human nature by the conquest of the devilish propensities towards wickedness, vanity, depravity and lustfulness. He emphasised that moral regeneration was essential even for political and social betterment. But he was also not tired of preaching the significance of the Constructive Programme. Thus the Gandhian political philosophy represents a synthesis of the spiritual and the mundane. If on one side it has its eyes fixed upon the eschatological conception of the salvation of the human soul, it is, on the other side, no less emphatic in its urgent appeal for bettering the economic and social conditions of the Indian villages by stressing the use of Khadi and the practice of the rules of hygiene and cleanliness.

As a system of thought, Gandhism represents different intellectual currents in a process of synthesis. This element of synthesis imparts to Gandhism great power of appeal. He had been deeply influenced by the New Testament, the Bhagvadgita, the life of Gautama Buddha and Tolstoy. Like Plato, Rousseau, Tolstoy and Dayananda, Gandhi represents a reaction against civilization, its sophistries and its ostentations, and its maximization of luxuries and pleasure. Like Fichte and Mazzini, Gandhi is a champion of nationalism. Like Ciceron and Aquinas, Gandhi upholds the cause of moral authority in politics. Like Spencer, Seeley and the other individualists, Gandhi also has a distrust of the action of government. Like

Marx, Kautsky and Lenin, Gandhi is opposed to social and economic exploitation. Like T. H. Green, William Wallace and Hobhouse, Gandhi preaches the orientation of individual claims and rights to the realization of the notion of the common rational good of all men. Like John of Salisbury, Hotman, Calvin, Thoreau and Laski, Gandhi vindicates the right of resistance against unjustified authority. The Gandhian philosophy of Sarvodaya is partly based on Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. John Ruskin had started with the basic aim of moralising the economic assumptions of the classical economists. Thus it can be said that Gandhi's fusion of the teachings of the Gita and Buddhism, with the teachings of the Bible, Tolstoy and Ruskin points to a cultural synthesis of the East and West.

But when I stress the synthesis of different types of intuitions and thought-propositions in the life and thought of Gandhi, it must not be inferred that this synthesis has been elaborately worked out in any grandiose work like Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* or *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. I have stated in the beginning of this book that Gandhi was not a philosophical synthesiser. The synthesis that he worked out was in his activities and his political movements. He was not a great intellectual genius. His powers of intellectual creativism of an original character were limited and this is shown by the fact that he engaged in summarizing or paraphrasing some important books that inspired him. For example, he either summarized or paraphrased or translated Plato's *Apology*, Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, Salter's *Ethical Religion*, Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*, Paul Bureau's *Towards Moral Bankruptcy*, part of W. Irving's *Life of the Prophet* (Mohammad) etc., in the pages of the *Indian Opinion* or in other small booklets. Hence when I stress the synthesis of a large number of thought-currents in Gandhism, the sceptical critic need not be unduly alarmed that I am trying to exalt and unduly elevate Gandhi as a political and social philosopher. During the course of his long and eventful life of seventy-nine years, he came across a number of important points of view and in his life and activities he wanted to concretely practice those teachings which appealed to his emotions and reason. Therein consisted his greatness.

The political philosophy of Gandhi has its basic roots in his studies of the Bible and the Gita and his own intuitions and spiritual perceptions. But in its details it has reference to almost the whole history of Indian and world politics from about 1893 to 1948. It has a comprehensive orientation because Gandhi gave out his views on almost all the important questions of Indian society, economics and politics as well as the problems of world diplomacy. He did not cast his views in clear-cut, rigid, logical categories but made suggestions to solve immediate problems. Hence there is an element of fluidity and intellectual catholicity in the Gandhian system. Gandhism is not a finished and closed system of thought. Gandhi recognised the necessity of further experimentations and reflections

to keep in touch with the demands of the times. But there was to be no compromise with the fundamental concepts of truth and non-violence. Just as Gandhi himself has added new sociological and political meaning in the application of the old concepts of truth, *Ahimsa* and love, so the Gandhian concepts and principles have to be re-interpreted and new meaning has to be added to them. The central, spiritual and moral emphasis is to remain unchanged but the actual contents can be widened and extended. Thus, Gandhism can adjust itself to the demands of the times. The great merit of Gandhism is that being a synthetic and comprehensive system of social and political philosophy it can incorporate newer elements from other kindred systems of thought. The addition of fresh categories of understanding, or a reinterpretation of some of its details, it will not regard as examples of deviation or apostacy. Throughout his life, Gandhi had a wonderful resilience of mind. One of his greatest teachings was cultural synthesis. Hence intellectual comprehensiveness and theoretical catholicity shown by the willingness for ever-growing synthesis of diverse types of kindred abstractions and propositions is the basic methodological contribution of Gandhism to modern thought. This indicates its constructive strength.

Gandhism is not a system of dogmatic, closed, scholastic political thought. But the very fact that Gandhism is an open system also implies that it is not a complete philosophy. The same charge of incompleteness can, however, also be made against any other system of thought-structure—Platonism or Lockeanism or Marxian dialectical materialism. Completeness would imply the exhaustive analysis of all relevant facts and data and would require almost a superhuman capacity for construction. No dynamic philosophy can ever be complete. The creation of any absolutely complete system of thought will signify the decadence of human power of constructive intellectual creativism. No finite mind can create an eternally perfect system of ideas.

It is also possible to amend Gandhism by the method of reconstruction. With all great thinkers, it has been possible to reinterpret their ideas in the light of the changed conditions as well as in the light of the evolution of human thought. Aristotle was interpreted in one way by the Aristotelians in Greece. The Arabs interpreted him differently. Saint Thomas Aquinas, in the thirteenth century, used Aristotelian arguments to support Biblical theology. Hence this method of constructive interpretation can be also used so far as Gandhism is concerned. Gandhi's basic emphasis on truth and *Ahimsa* must be retained but his economic and political ideas may be amended to suit changed conditions. Only thus can we retain the Gandhian spirit. If we become dogmatic literalists, we will make Gandhism a lifeless corpse. Some people may say that this constructive interpretation is a betrayal of the original spirit of the writer. But I do not agree with this view. It is possible to extend

the notions of a writer and interpret them to suit the new conditions. Gandhi himself imputed new meanings to the older concepts of Hindu philosophy.

## **2. Ethical Idealism in Gandhian Political Thought**

Gandhism reinforces the valuational and teleological approach to politics which we find in Plato, Cicero, Augustine, Aquinas and Kant. Gandhi, as repeated earlier, was inspired by the moral teachings of Buddhism, Gita, Ruskin and Tolstoy. This fact together with his own sanctified character of a moral prophet always in quest of the divine reality will substantiate our interpretation of Gandhian political thought as being, by implication, opposed to the modern positivist attempt at a *Wertfreiwissenschaft*—a value-free social science. Gandhi would definitely and categorically subordinate economics and politics to ethics. Thus he appears as another Plato and Cicero vindicating the cause of the spiritual and moral approach to political problems and asserting that no external change can be lasting without an inner psychological change. A demand that the social and political thinker should desist from prescribing values of his own and should in the name of scientific objectivity maintain an attitude of ethical neutrality in his research publications, would sound like a betrayal of truth, to Gandhi. He felt that the supreme loyalty of a person at all times and places is to truth and conscience.<sup>1</sup> He even suspected intellectual scholasticism, and one of his reasons was that the intellect sometimes is used to provide theoretical support to an immoral existence. His suspicion may be, and is, exaggerated. But at a time when India is passing through a transition from the old traditions of despotism, authoritarianism, feudalism and Brahmanical ecclesiasticism, Gandhi would consider the adoption of ethical neutrality in scientific publications as a capitulation because neutrality in face of vital stakes would mean at least an indirect support to the enemies of freedom and justice. To Gandhi, man is, first of all and essentially, a person before he is a social scientist, and in no moment of his life and least of all in his research investigations and theoretical generalization, is he to renounce his loyalty to the criteria of moral values. The research worker must state his own views on the problems of his research. Social sciences would have a meaning for Gandhi only if they uphold the cause of truth, justice and freedom. Mere absorption in the pedestrian work of computing the risks and costs of the implementation of alternative policies laid down by political rulers would be a betrayal of truth and honesty.

<sup>1</sup> It is significant that Dr. Rajendra Prasad, first President of Independent India and a great Gandhian, in his article "India's Debt to Gandhi", in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *Mahatma Gandhi*, pp. 261-64, regards lifting of politics to an exalted idealism by placing "truth on its pedestal of glory even in politics", as the greatest contribution of Gandhi, and not his creation of a mass movement in India.

Hence, howsoever much positivism and *Wertfreiheit* may provide delight to social and behavioural scientists of Western Europe and America, they have no place in Gandhi's vocabulary whose first and last terms are overwhelming loyalty to the demands of moral life.

The world is faced with a baffling and difficult situation. It is important at such an hour to re-stress the moral and spiritual assumptions of social, economic and political existence. A clarification of the assumptions will help in the building of a detailed programme of positive action and concrete technics. The correct technics can be only applied if the initial moral and spiritual assumptions are understood and properly stressed.

But the modern critical and sceptical intellectual initially finds it difficult to accept the message of Gandhi which is the reassertion of the Vedantic-Buddhistic-Stoic-Christian belief in the final victory of truth (as contrasted to the theory of the survival of the fittest). Gandhi's political philosophy makes an appeal to the values of the human personality in an age when the dignity, worth and sacrosanct character of man has been and might again be rudely and savagely attacked by the extraneous might of the weapons of mass destruction. The Malthusian-Darwinian-Nietzschean emphasis on the victory of the strong over the weak has provided the theoretical support to some of the perverse political creeds of the modern world. In an age full of sickening horror, and secrecy and espionage carried to perfection, the gospel of the essential spirituality of man proclaimed by Gandhi sounds somewhat anachronistic, but at the same time, this type of assessment is a tragic commentary on the transfer of the loyalty of the modern man from Buddha, Mahavira and Christ to Lamarck, Marx and Haeckel.

Our world today is threatened with darkness, disintegration, normlessness and decadence and the possible prospects of eventual disaster, disease, extermination and even extinction are being discussed in certain thinking circles. Some philosophers are warning us of the chances of an impending annihilation. Gandhism reasserts, at such a grim hour, the eternal value of the old religious truths and it appears as a source of hope and moral optimism. To the modern world professing atheism, vitalism, mechanism, realism or an absorption in sense-data, Gandhi's has been the most determined attempt to reveal the substantive value of the old religious tenets. The recognition of divine purpose even in a disorderly and struggling world and increasing exertions for the realization of that purpose have been the central goals of Gandhi's private and public life for over half a century. In a sense his tragic martyrdom in 1948 may be the authentic beginning of the reassertion of the sanctity of Dharma in its moral sense as inculcated by Buddha, Patanjali and Asoka.

Gandhi's outlook was far more comprehensive than that of

the religious scholastics and priests who are dogmatically and fanatically teaching the respective superiority of their own limited creeds. He stressed peace, modesty, gentleness, philanthropy and a sense of devout respect for the religious views of others. Gandhi has vindicated the age-old religious wisdom of Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Asia by re-stressing in our perplexed and chaotic world the values of truth, non-violence, chastity and social justice. This religious orientation of Gandhian teachings can very well make it the foundation of socialism and democracy. Rama, Buddha, Mahavira, Moses, Jesus Christ, Zoroaster, Confucius, Nanak, Vivekananda and other prophets taught the sanctity and supremacy of the spiritual and moral vows. The inculcation of moral teachings is almost immanent in the religious and intellectual heritage of Asia. But Gandhi was not content merely with an inward realization of the religious vows. He wanted to make them dynamic. On their basis a perpetual struggle was to be waged for the vindication of the rights of the disinherited, the meek, the humble and the exploited sections of humanity. For the first time in the recorded history of man, Gandhi led such a colossal movement from 1893 to 1948 for the recovery of the dignity and esteem of the simple, the forlorn and the neglected common man of India, and indirectly, also of Asia. Hence the humble and gentle and exploited folks in Asia and Africa found only an explicit echo of their own sentiments in his writings and his message. A religious life did not mean to Gandhi a life of resignation and withdrawal in a cloister. It meant active non-violent struggle for the assertion of the superiority of justice, rights and truth. His life was his testament. By his dedicated life of service he has imparted a new and vitalized efficiency to the perennial religious teachings of spiritual worth. The old religious truths have once again obtained added social value and political significance. This undying spirit has a message for the reconstruction of humanity.<sup>2</sup> Thus the activation and dynamization of the old religious teachings of Asia in the form of the philosophy of Satyagraha is perhaps Gandhi's greatest contribution to the political philosophy of the world.

Gandhi was aghast at the terrible depredations against the human personality made by the two World Wars. At a time when the gospels of class struggle, militant proletarianism and war among nations are being preached, the emphasis on ethical humanism in Gandhism to be regarded as a contribution to world political philosophy. In the world today, there is a craze for planning and the increase in the standard of living. No one need deny the great social significance of these programmes. But it is equally urgent to stress the immense necessity of the moral renaissance of man.

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<sup>2</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Gandhi the Man", *The Visvabharati Quarterly, Gandhi Memorial Number*, p. 13, wrote, : "Perhaps he will fail as the Buddha failed and as Christ failed to wean men from their iniquities, but he will always be remembered as one who made his life a lesson for all ages to come."

Gandhism also wants to bring about a moral transformation in human society. It aims to substitute coercion as the dominant technic of political action by the supremacy of self-suffering love. It seeks to stress the perennial moral virtues and thus it stands as a great antithesis to those political theories which exalt power politics, struggle or imperialistic exploitation. Gandhi dreams of a non-violent society. It is essential to cultivate a deep moral outlook before we can have this type of society.

Gandhism teaches the repudiation of *Machtpolitik*. It stresses the replacement of conflict, discord, barbarity and pugnacity by freedom, will and right. It upholds the replacement of the vulgarity of force by the authentic power of the changed human heart. Gandhi preached the eventual victory of the powers of the Spirit over the amassed and consolidated strength of armaments and material prosperity and political power. He had confidence in the final victory of moral and spiritual power. Against the terrifying doctrines of war, conquest, revenge and exploitation, Gandhi, as a world prophet, taught the holiness of the spirit and faith in its ultimate triumph. Thus it advocates a spiritual philosophy of history and civilization. Gandhi is pessimistic of mere institutional changes and hence he places great emphasis on moral education, inner purification through the practice of the moral vows and the transfiguration of the soul. He is a prophet of the inner conscience and the internal light and the superiority of the moral quest. Gandhism stands for the great values of liberty, equality, social justice, individual rights and fundamental freedoms, and fearlessness. These basic political values are to be realised by the attainment of an integral culture of the spirit. Spiritual conversion is the only abiding method of dealing with the social and political problems of man. Hence behind political governance there has to be inner governance. Thus Gandhism with its emphasis on the religious remaking of human nature represents the reassertion of the idealistic foundations of politics.

Gandhi was a prophet of cosmopolitanism and internationalism. He transcended the spheres of localism, sectionalism, casteism, provincialism and patriotism. His teachings of truth and *Ahimsa* were meant not for a group or a class. He wrote not for a city or a country but for mankind. Gandhi did not speak of sectional supremacy, whether it be of the Greek or of the Hindu, of the aristocrat or of the military elite, of a class or a group. His humanism made him a champion of internationalism. He stood for embracing all mankind in fraternal embrace. Thus fundamentally he was a cosmopolitan and internationalist. Hitherto philosophers of history have been upholding a "Ptolemaic" conception of world progress because the western world is regarded by them as the centre of civilization. The "Copernican" revolution in the idea of world civilization placing equal emphasis on the recognition of the contributions of and the development of all areas and countries of

the earth—the hope of civilized humanity—can come only with an increasing conformity to internationalism.

The United Nations Charter stresses the pacific settlement of international disputes by the methods of diplomatic negotiation, mediation or good offices, conciliation, commissions of enquiry, arbitration and judicial settlement. While he was pursuing the career of a lawyer, Gandhi had always pleaded for arbitration in place of the prolonged waiting for justice in the courts. He would also have supported the pacific technics for the settlement of international tensions. By his constant readiness to sacrifice his own life in the settlement of social and communal tensions in India, he had vindicated, in a sense, the method of mediation for the resolution of conflicts. It is possible to argue that he would have whole-heartedly recommended mediation and arbitration for the settlement of disputes which threatened the peace of the world. The essential point in Gandhi's political thought is the purification of man. Hence, unless there is, in man, the spirit of confidence, trust and co-operation, the pacific technics of resolution of world conflict have no chance of success. Therefore, Gandhi insisted on the reality of an all-embracing positive love which he interpreted *Ahimsa* really to be.

There have been speculations, so far, about the 'philosophical state' by Plato, about the 'ethical state' by Fichte and about the 'culture state' by German theoreticians. Gandhi stood as the prophet of the non-violent state, enlightened anarchy and Ramrajya. In an age of the blighting twilight of moral values, he was creating a spiritualized transvaluation of mundane values or which is the same thing, he was trying to create the foundations for Ramrajya or the kingdom of God on earth. He believed that Swaraj was only the first stage. Perfection belongs to the highest stage—the stage of Ramrajya or universal Sarvodaya. Hence his life and his work devoted to the realization of the ethical philosophy of perfection will continue through the future to be the greatest monuments to him. In his attempts to bring about the consummation of ethical universalism through amity and harmony, he has heralded the dawn of new era. This universalism is not an original gospel but the momentous significance of Gandhi's appeal lies in the fact that behind his writings there is the convincing power of his personality.

### **3. Gandhism in National and World Politics**

Gandhi stressed the moral bankruptcy of modern civilization and prescribed the sanctity of non-violence. He believed that violence interrupted the real revolution in the social structure for the realization of solidarity and fraternity. Non-violent Satyagraha alone could revolutionize social ideals and prepare the foundations of a society based on justice, equality, freedom, peace and cosmopolitanism. He sincerely believed that violence would spell the doom of

mankind. He thought that a peaceful solution of our problems was not only possible but was also the only way to have a stable solution for the complex and difficult problems of man.

I do not think it possible, however, that the entire philosophy and sociology of Gandhi can be put to practice immediately. But I also think that it is sociologically wrong to put perfect Gandhism or no Gandhism as the only two alternatives amongst which some irrevocable choice has to be made. There is a long line of transition between absolute Gandhism and non-Gandhism, just as there are immense shades of differences between white and black. Even that great admirer of Gandhi and his message—Romain Rolland—did not recommend the application of Gandhian technics in Europe in the late thirties when the Rome-Berlin Axis had threatened to be the most dangerous portent in world politics.<sup>3</sup> But the fact that one may not recommend absolute Gandhism does not mean that we should renounce Gandhism. The great truths take time to become the permanent possessions of mankind. Gradual attempts have to be made to approximate slowly towards the Gandhian ideal. No philosophy of *Real politic* can be practised wholesale either. Those who talk glibly of realism, cannot say that the whole of the ideas of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Bismarck and Nietzsche can be practised by any politician or state. No social and political structure can be raised and maintained on the basis of the concepts of mere egoism, power, pugnacity, force, cupidity, exploitation and aggression. If only these categories were to operate, the whole commonwealth would be converted into group of brigands and robbers. Social and moral will and not political and military force can be the stable basis of any political entity. Hence if absolute idealism is utopian, no less utopian and unfounded is to think that it is possible to apply the programmes and technics of absolute realism. The actual world moves and progresses by the union of both idealistic and realistic constituents and elements.

One great contribution of Gandhian philosophy is that it can serve as a conceptual pattern. It can serve as a system of norms and moral values that can guide our actual behaviour in society and state. It can act as a measuring-rod for our conduct as men and citizens. Even the citizens of the state have to look to the requirements of world citizenship. Gradual, habitual and constant attempts to realize

<sup>3</sup> R. Rolland, "Homage from a Man of the West to Gandhi", in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.) *M. Gandhi*, 1st ed. pp. 271-72, wrote: "To be applied to politics, the doctrine of non-violence requires a very different moral climate from that which pervades the Europe of today; it demands a total, immense and unanimous sacrifice of self, which has no present chance of success, in the face of the growing ferocity of the new systems of totalitarian dictatorship.... Their (peoples of Europe) political abdication would inevitably lead to the servitude of humanity, perhaps for centuries. In these circumstances we cannot recommend the practice of Gandhi's doctrine, however much we may respect it."

the values stressed by Gandhi in social and political life may be regarded as the criteria of judging our success in the art of civilization.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the arbitrament of sword has always a sinister attraction for most people provided the issue can be decided in one's own favour. It is also true that some unscrupulous agents of imperialistic power politics may mock Gandhi's concern with technics of civility, gentleness and love, but humanity will have to turn to his teachings if the devastation of civilization is to be avoided.

It is true that the communal murders perpetrated in 1946-47 in Bengal, Bihar and the Punjab on an enormously great scale indicated that India had not taken the Gandhian teachings to heart. Indians had taken to non-violent resistance against the British because they were helpless against the British might. But they had not cultivated the non-violence of the brave. Regardless of this failure of Indians to stick to Gandhian teachings, there is no cause of despair. Gandhi himself had an invincible faith in the nobility of human nature. Perhaps man will be compelled by sheer necessity to become noble, because the alternative to goodness is imminent peril and possible destruction.

Joad is more optimistic than Rolland. C.E.M. Joad, "The Authority of Detachment and Moral Force", in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *M. Gandhi*, p. 171, says : "He (Gandhi) has announced a method for the settlement of disputes which may not only supersede the method of force, but, as men grow more powerful in the art of destruction, must supersede it if civilization is to survive. No doubt his method has for the moment failed ; no doubt he has promised more than he can perform, but if men had never promised more than it was possible for them to perform, the world would be the poorer, for the achieved reform is the child of the unachieved ideal."

Part THREE

**GANDHISM AND COMPARATIVE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

# 15

## GANDHI AND PLATO

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Gandhi prepared an abridged Gujrati version of Plato's *Apology* and eloquently brought out therein the character of Socrates as a non-violent resister. On April 4, 1908, he wrote the foreword of *Ek Satyavira Ki Katha* (Gujrati version of the *Apology*). On November 22, 1908, he wrote the foreword of *Hind-Swaraj*. It is possible that Plato had a threefold influence on Gandhi—

- (i) Creating in Gandhi's mind and heart a permanent fascination for Socrates as a non-violent resister.
- (ii) Strengthening the repulsion for the external pomp of civilization.
- (iii) Generating a possible fascination for the dialogue method of writing as in the *Hind-Swaraj*.<sup>1</sup>

As stated above, at about the same time that Gandhi wrote the *Hind-Swaraj*, he also wrote and published an abridged Gujrati translation of Plato's *Apology*, and I have a strong feeling that in those days he might have been influenced by Plato's ideas and specially his criticisms against doctors and lawyers. Plato in his *Republic* had advocated that every man should be his own lawyer and doctor. He said that a return should be made to the days of Aesculapius and Homer when the practice of medicine was very simple, the "nursing of disease" having begun only with Herodicus.

Both Gandhi and Plato have an integral comprehensive approach to the problems of man and society. Hence in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, Plato simultaneously discusses political, economic, moral and educational problems. Gandhi also is concerned with all dimensions of human problems. We have seen, hence, that no study of his political theory is possible without a probe into their metaphysical, religious and ethical foundations and their social and economic implications. Contrasted to the modern approaches to political science which are highly specialized and consequently intensive but narrow, the methodology of Plato and Gandhi is more inclusive, generalized and wide.

<sup>1</sup> But the dialogue form he might as well have got from the *Bhagavadgita*.

Both Gandhi and Plato have a spiritual approach to history. Freedom, according to both, can be obtained through a process of inner purification and illumination. Ethics, according to both, is a matter not of mere outward social conformity but has to be founded upon knowledge. For Gandhi, political action is a means for human service, which, in its turn, is an instrument for the realization of God. To Plato, the highest guardians illumined with the awareness of the Idea of Good would mould political action in consonance with the highest principles of knowledge. Thus both Gandhi and Plato would refuse to regard political action as a good in itself. It is only a stage for some higher and nobler attainment. Consequently, both would repudiate the conversion of politics into a game for power. It is only to lessen the brutalities of power that Plato formulates his scheme of philosophical education. For chastening the barbarities of the politics of power, Gandhi pleads for incorporating the religious teachings of truth and non-violence into politics. He accepts that what is required for social reconstruction and political salvation is that there should be an intense growth and activization of those moral faculties and attributes which have, thus far, only dimly and inadequately revealed their potentialities at social and political levels. Both Gandhi and Plato adopt a teleological and valuational approach to politics since both think that politics cannot be divorced from a higher moral orientation. Thus Gandhi's solution is similar to Plato's and not to that of Nietzsche.

The central theme in Plato's *Republic* is justice. He is dissatisfied with the purely historical and conventional approaches to justice as held by Cephalus, Polemarchus and Glaucon and refuses to support Thrasymachus's view of the promulgations of the government as being judicial pronouncements because the government has its own interest to subserve. Plato locates justice in man's heart and wants an integration between the rational and irrational parts of the soul. The social structure is to be a reflection of the dominant virtues in a man's heart. Those with the predominance of reason in their being are to be appointed guardians, while those with the predominance of courage are to be appointed soldiers. Gandhi also was a great advocate of justice. As a lawyer, by profession, in his earlier days, he always wanted justice to prevail. He also pleaded for justice to the suppressed and backward sections of the Hindu society, but the overwhelming and the predominant emphasis on justice that one finds in Plato's *Republic* is not to be met with in Gandhi. The central concepts in his ethics and politics on the other hand, are truth and non-violence. It must be stated, however, that both Gandhi and Plato were in favour of the social structure being based on the concept of division of labour. Plato, however, was more radical in his social philosophy because he believes in the possibility of transposition of ranks in his society. In other words, birth is not the determining criterion of social belongingness or social stratification, accor-

ding to Plato. In Gandhi, on the other hand, the theory of *Varna* is based on occupational organisation to be determined by one's birth.

*Abhayam* as emphasised by Gandhi is a richer and nobler conception than courage as advocated in Plato's *Republic* : (i) Courage is implanted, in soldiers, by making them have right opinion (*doxa*) of things they are to be afraid of and things they are not to be afraid of. Thus the foundation of courage is in *opinion* (*doxa* as opposed to knowledge of *epistema*) but *Abhayam* is rooted finally in spiritual illumination. (ii) Courage in the *Republic* is a virtue of the soldiers (auxiliaries) but *Abhayam* is for Satyagrahis and the seekers of God.

Plato proposed a system of communism for the two higher classes of his society. He also made the revolutionary suggestion of community of wives and children for the guardians in his ideal polity. Gandhi would have revolted with horror at this latter suggestion. In matters of marital relations, he was the follower of a very rigorous and chaste code of morality. In place of the communisation of property, Gandhi would advocate the notion of trusteeship which implies, at least, nominal individual ownership and the use of wealth for social purposes. Both Gandhi and Plato are agreed, however, that man's life should be on the practice of the principle of simplicity and unnecessary accumulation must be avoided at all costs.

Plato's very important theme—the theory of philosopher-ruler-may, to some extent, be compared to the Gandhian notion of Ramrajya, if the latter conception is interpreted, in the traditional Indian sense to signify benevolent monarchy oriented to the realization of the good of all people. There is no doubt that the rule of the philosophers would demand the necessary existence of a reformed political system. But the Gandhian notion of Ramrajya may also be interpreted as signifying a state of enlightened anarchy that would be characterized by the absence of governmental coercion. If this second interpretation is emphasised, then, Ramrajya cannot be compared to the notion of the philosopher-ruler. There are two interpretations of Ramrajya. One is the traditional interpretation as formulated in the *Ramayana* of Valmiki or in the *Adhyatma Ramayana* or in the Puranas or in the various *Ramayanas* in the Indian languages. According to this interpretation, Ramrajya is a political system based on benevolence, consideration for good, peace and social amity. The king is there at the top, more or less, as a father of his subjects. Secondly, there is the Gandhian conception of Ramrajya, the influence of anarchists like Tolstoy may be seen. Those passages in Gandhi's writings which bear the influence of western anarchist school will justify an interpretation that will be totally different from the ideal of the rule of the philosophers.

Plato was a trenchant critic of democracy. How could he support democracy which had the audacity to put to death his teacher Socrates

in 399 B.C.<sup>2</sup> Although in the *Statesman* Plato has moderated his criticisms of democracy, in the *Republic*, he almost totally condemns it. Gandhi, on the other hand, although not a complete admirer of the modern system of parliamentary democracy based on direct election and universal adult suffrage was, so far as India was concerned, an advocate of parliamentary democracy and adult suffrage. He was far more sympathetic to the democratic institutions like the functioning of a legislature, the independent working of the judicial system and the operation of principles of the parliamentary democracy than Plato.

Both are apprehensive of democratic excesses. Nevertheless, Gandhi had far more of the democratic spirit of identification with the masses than the Athenian aristocrat. In the *Republic*, the husbandmen have no creative purpose of their own except producing for the two higher classes. Gandhi's spirit, on the other hand, clamoured for identification with the semi-starved mute millions of India, and he was always stressing their rights and interests in India's Swaraj.

In the tradition of Herodotus, Plato has formulated a scheme of six forms of government in the *Statesman* and five in the *Republic*. Out of these latter five forms, four are comprehended in the sixfold scheme of the *Statesman*. Only timocracy is the novel concept in the *Republic*. The six forms of the government in the *Statesman* are monarchy, tyranny, aristocracy, oligarchy, democracy and perverted democracy. Gandhi has not gone into an elaborate and systematic study of the various forms of government and the states. In the writings of Gandhi, however, there are references to the different forms of contemporary political systems with which he came in contact. We may find references to the system of the Caliphate then existing in Turkey, the native states as operating in India prior to 1947-1948, the system of Crown colonies and responsible government as found in South Africa, the British parliamentary system with its constitutional monarchy and the patterns of dominion status in Canada, Australia etc. As a political leader, he had to express his opinions regarding the form of constitution contemplated in the Nehru Report of 1928, the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935 and the Cripps and the Cabinet Mission proposals. Thus the different constitutional measures either operating in India or contemplated for future implementation, necessarily provided themes on which Gandhi gave his favourable or unfavourable reactions. So far as personal preference is concerned, Plato was for aristocracy. Gandhi, on the other hand, was for constitutionalism and the widest possible support of democracy.

At the operative and the institutional levels, Plato was an elitist. He wanted the rule of the selected few, of course, the selection being

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<sup>2</sup> J. B. Bury, *A History of Greece*, (London, Macmillan, 1931), p. 581.

made on the basis of virtue. Gandhi, on the other hand, was a mass leader and he wanted the creation of a political system on the basis of the widest possible participation of the citizens. While Plato was a supporter of inequality, Gandhi was a radical equalitarian.

Gandhi is more of a humanitarian than Plato. While Plato sanctioned defensive wars, Gandhi was, to a considerable extent, a pacifist. According to Plato, the guardians, even after the acquisition of dialectical cognition, can engage in military activities. But Gandhi felt that an entirely new awareness of cosmic fraternity dawns upon man by the practice of *Ahimsa* as creative love and dynamic beneficence. Plato and Aristotle were the teachers of the perfected and idealized *polis*. But Gandhi was a world teacher and a humanitarian. In spite of all dialectical training and a transcendent vision of the idea of the good, Plato's highest guardians do not rise above the sense of aggression and defence. They are essentially watch-dogs or guards of the city.

Furthermore, while Gandhi, always swearing by the canons of conscience, was a resolute Satyagrahi in quest of truth and *Ahimsa*, Plato, the Greek, was a dominant admirer of the community life of the *polis*. To a Greek, the *polis* was the uppermost consideration. Contrasted to the societarian orientation of Plato, Gandhi was the great moral and political individualist who taught the sanctity of resistance to all types of unjustified authority. But the Greek Plato could never think in terms of resisting the established structure of political authority.

Both Plato and Gandhi are agreed that it is essential to change the present human consciousness for effectuating a radical solution of political problems. But while Plato stresses an illumination of consciousness by dialectical reason, Gandhi emphasised the change of heart. The latter felt that reason has to be substantiated by the power of suffering. Where rational arguments do not carry conviction, suffering makes effective and spontaneous appeal. He realised that mere academic training and intellectual refinement is not of much avail because it does not impart that solidity of character which is needed to give a man moral strength to withstand temptations and fear. Hence he was a little indifferent to mere accumulation of information about things. He, on the other hand, wanted training in moral virtues. He condemned mere "book education". He would never put that serious emphasis on the training in higher mathematics and dialectical philosophy that Plato does. Education, according to Gandhi, has to lead to purification of character and salvation of the soul. If moral teachings were practised in life, a silent social revolution could be effectuated because if the individuals succeeded in building their character, society could take care of itself because, society is only the complex network of the response-patterns of

individuals. Hence Gandhi taught that the transformation of individual character was essential for the moralization of society and politics.

But in spite of difference at the level of views regarding governmental organisation, public administration and the social system, there is widespread agreement in both of these writers with regard to the importance of virtue in politics, and both, essentially, belong to the tradition of the idealistic school of politics.

# 16

## GANDHI AND AUGUSTE COMTE

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### 1. Introduction

The problem of social amelioration and reconstruction has been a subject of enquiry with several sociologists and political thinkers. The phenomenal eminence that Gandhi achieved in the application of the technics of Satyagraha based on the creative altruism of *Ahimsa* to problems of social and political existence has inspired several workers, leaders and writers, and has made prominent the theme of the universal freedom and ennoblement of man. The concept of truth is lauded in the Hindu scriptures. The Vedas exalt *Rita* and *Satya*. The *Mundakopanishad* says 'truth alone conquers'. The Mahabharata praises *Satya* and *Dharma*. The Christian scripture also says : "Ye shall take care of truth and truth shall make ye free." Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity sing hymns in praise of *Ahimsa* and non-resistance to evil by physical violence. Gandhi took seriously the old moral and religious teachings of the scriptures and transformed them into potent technics of group action at social, economic and political levels. This dynamization of the old teachings for purposes of group accommodation, agrarian reconstruction, communal rehabilitation and national emancipation has provided inspiration to thinkers and writers even in several other countries outside India. There are several common points in Gandhi and those idealistically-oriented western social scientists who believe that the social science should have an ethical and teleological orientation and should keep in view the realization of justice, peace and fraternity. The points of agreement between Gandhi and the western solidarists<sup>1</sup> are considerable. I have undertaken this comparative study of Gandhi and Auguste Comte (1798-1857) to emphasise the valuational approach to social and political problems which has been of significant concern to both of them.

It is true that the main activities of Gandhi and Comte were different. Gandhi was a man of action and a prophetic leader of

<sup>1</sup> The concept of social solidarity was stressed by Pierre Leroux and Bastiat in France. Later it was also preached by Leon Bourgeois, M. Bougle and Fleurant.

gigantic stature who wielded tremendous influence over Indian humanity. Auguste Comte, on the other hand, was an encyclopaedic sociologist of eminent stature. As an original social thinker, although he may not rank with Plato, Aristotle, Locke and Rousseau, certainly he is superior to Bolingbroke, Fenelon, Sismondi, Max Stirner and Durkheim. His six volumes of *Positive Philosophy*<sup>2</sup> and four volumes of *Positive Polity*<sup>3</sup> reveal his power of systematic intellectual construction. He had a deep knowledge of philosophy and history and had profound capacity of original synthesis. Comte appeals to us by the excellence of his intellectual massiveness, his vigour of theoretical argumentation and his zeal for social reconstruction and reform. In spite of this difference in the fundamental mould and structure of personality of Gandhi and Comte, this comparative study aims at emphasising the necessity of the intellectual and moral transformation of mankind which is the essence of the teaching of these two personalities. In the world today there is a craze for total planning, economic development and growth. I do not deny the great social significance of these programmes. But along with Gandhi and Comte, I believe in the urgency of the moral and intellectual renaissance of man. A mechanical change in the institutional and associational structure may create a surface ebullition, but much more vital is the control of the social entropy through the method of the change of the human heart and mind. It is essential to have a comprehensive social philosophy<sup>4</sup> which will give us a theory of social homeostasis, group accommodation and social reconstruction, and at the same time will stress the moral and conscious governance of the processes of human evolution. It is sheer inertia and pessimism to be content with the acceptance of the automatic workings of social and economic forces as the exponents of *laissez-faire* and non-interventionism would like. Gandhi pleaded for dynamic and strenuous efforts on the basis of the 'moral

2 *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, (published in French between 1830 and 1842), freely translated and condensed by Harriet Martineau in two volumes, London, John Chapman, MDCCCLIII.

3 Auguste Comte, *System of Positive Polity*, (published in French between 1851 and 1854). In four volumes. English translation, Vol. I by J.H. Bridges; Vol. II, by F. Harrison; Vol. III, by E. S. Beesly; Vol. IV by G.R. Congreve. Published by Longmans, Green & Co., 1875-1877.

4 According to A. Comte, sociology has two sub-divisions. (i) Social Statics deals with the spontaneous order of interpersonal relations. It is concerned with the "type" towards which an institution constantly tends. (ii) Social dynamics, which is a general theory of social advancement (progress). It is concerned with social modifications. The great principle is that progress is the development of order. Order and progress are the two important constituents of positive sociology. Progress is the consequence of order. It appears that Comte has adopted the concept of progress propounded by Turgot and Cordorcet and other enlightened philosophers. Joseph Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, pp. 416-17, points out that Comte adopted the terms Statics and Dynamics from the Zoologist H. de Blainville. Statics is non-evolutionary and deals with the order produced by social instincts which act and react upon one another and produce the social order by an equilibrating process. Dynamics is evolutionary.

vows' to bring about the regeneration of humanity. Comte believed that the institution of positive priesthood would initiate humanity on the path of order and progress. Both Gandhi and Comte have, thus, a valuational and teleological approach to the problems of society. They repudiate the standpoint of some organicists and evolutionists who plead for a theory of supreme non-intervention in the social process. The conscious and deliberate power of human will, emotion and cognition has to be brought to bear upon the workings of the social structure.

Gandhi came from a religious Vaishnava family of Gujurat and the asceticism and self-abnegation that we find in his character had their roots in his family background. He was immensely devoted to his parents and believed in unquestioning obedience to them as a cardinal virtue. With the advance of years, this devotion was transformed into loyalty to the moral commandments, and for him, observance of the vows of truth, non-violence and chastity became a matter of supreme concern overriding all other obligations. He was deeply sensitive to matters concerning self-respect and personal dignity. Hence he would not adopt an attitude of submission or complacency in matters touching his personal honour or the honour of the nation. He, therefore, rose into being an eloquent and pronounced defender of the rights of Indians against racial exploitation and humiliation. But in all his struggles he would use only the technics of gentleness, civility and modesty. Never would he make any compromise with the authoritative, religious and moral standards. The deep and profound devotion of Gandhi to ethical religion left its indelible mark also on his political technics. He was reluctant to take faults and feebleness of advantage of his opponents and would willingly give up his hard-won political victories if that would satisfy the minority. In 1924, in order to preserve unity in the Indian National Congress, he refused to stress the majority of his group over that of the Swarajists led by C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru.

Comte was influenced by St. Simon and Clotide de Vaux. He was inspired by science and reason. He pleaded for the replacement of abstract and dogmatic metaphysics by positive science. He was a votary of scientific knowledge and advocated the application of scientific methods to the study of social problems and phenomena. He pleaded for the institution of a non-theological priesthood. It is true that he was opposed to the constraint exercised by the traditional church but the very retention of the term "priesthood" is significant as an index to the influence of Roman Catholicism on his mind. At a time when socialists and anarchists were talking in terms of an undifferentiated social structure, Comte accepted the concepts of order and hierarchy which, again, indicate the influence, upon him, of the Roman Catholic social and ecclesiastical structure. He traced the germs of female emancipation in the medieval practice of the worship of Virgin Mary. Thus it is clear that both

Gandhi and Comte derived their normative, axiological and ethical approach to social and political problems from their respective situational background.

## 2. Methodology

With regard to the philosophy of social and intellectual evolution, Gandhi and Comte adopt divergent standpoints. It is true that Gandhi had, to some extent, the instinct of the scientist. His autobiography is entitled *Experiments With Truth*. The word *Experiment* is of significance, because it shows the pragmatic and sensible cast of Gandhi's mind. Furthermore, for Gandhi, the essence of spirituality lay in conscientious and dedicated living. He would not have sanctioned the concept of salvation by belief in dogmas. He stressed incessant disinterested altruistic action in quest of the realization of God. In the *Anasaktiyoga* or his interpretation of the Bhagavadgita, the value that Gandhi claims for his annotations and comments is that behind his writings there is the confidence gained from a sustained "practice" (*Abhyasa*) of the teachings of the great scripture for nearly half a century. When Gandhi became convinced of the superiority of nature-cure system of treatment, he practised it on his own body and on the bodies of his wife and children in face of grave risks to his and their lives. But to his instinct for practical experiments he added the religious notion of inner voice and the philosophical concept of sempiternal Truth. He believed in the mythological stories of divine protection offered to Vibhishana, Draupadi, Gajendra, (the Elephant), and Prahlad. As a Hindu, Gandhi accepted the truth conveyed by the concepts of *Karma* and reincarnation. From the Comtean standpoint, Gandhi's belief in the concepts of *Karma* and rebirth is an example of the *theological* element and his belief in the causal efficacy of the impersonal supreme spirit is a *metaphysical* element. In Gandhi's personality and teachings, however, there is an attempt at the combination of the scientific or positive with the theological and metaphysical methods and concepts. He would not consider them antithetical but would regard them as complementaries.

According to Comte, on the other hand, the theological, the metaphysical and the positive methods have been successively operative in human history. The theological age was prevalent up to 1300 A.D., from the earliest beginnings of human history and civilization. Fetishism (or animism), polytheism and monotheism (social monotheism and defensive monotheism) are the evolutionary stages of the theological consciousness which ascribes anthropomorphic character to the gods and God. From 1300 A.D. to 1800 A.D., Comte finds the triumph of the metaphysical stage in human thought. In this period, people adhered to the notion of an abstract force or Idea as the generator of or the causally potent agency behind worldly phenomena. From 1800 A.D. begins the scientific or positive method

of the analysis of phenomena.<sup>5</sup> The metaphysics of the Cartesian and German schools had become negative because of sheer dialectical argumentations.<sup>6</sup> Hence, according to Comte, it was essential to utilise the positive methods and techniques of science for the realization of progress.<sup>7</sup> He felt that just as the theological methodology had been supplanted by the metaphysical, so the metaphysical will be replaced by the scientific or positive. The positive method supports the value of science for prediction and social control. In place of seeking efficient and final causes, it is concerned with the concomitance and sequence of phenomena and pleads for a scientific organisation of society. To Comte, for the progress of evolutionary humanity it was essential to stress positive science because science could unravel the secrets of the cosmos and could be the effective instrument to plan a better social organisation. Positive science may provide even moral and intellectual guidance for social progress. Gandhi would have believed in a synthesis of the theological, the metaphysical and the positive methods and concepts, but Comte pleads for the replacement of the metaphysical by the scientific method, just as

Comte's scheme of human evolution can be thus represented :—  
Man's Cerebral System

<i>Feeling</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Intellect</i>
(a) Family (based on attachment or domestic altruism).	(a) Conquest.	(a) Theological (i) Fetishism (ii) Polytheism (iii) Monotheism.
(b) State (based on veneration or collective altruism).	(b) Defence.	(b) Metaphysical.
(c) Race (based on benevolence or universal altruism).	(c) Industry.	(c) Positive.

Comte refers to the "utterly negative character of the metaphysical doctrines" during the Revolutionary epoch. See *System of Positive Polity*, Vol. I, p. 88.

There are different schools of Positivism.

- (i) *Comte's positivism* : It is opposed to the transcendental approach of speculative metaphysics and the dogmatism of theology.  
*Sociological realist positivism* : It stresses the structural autonomy of society as a reality *sui generis*.  
*Legal positivism* : As expounded by Hobbes, Blackstone, Bentham, Austin and Thibaut, this school regards laws as commands proceeding from a juridically determinate human agency. Kelsen's pure theory of law may also be said to belong to this school.

G.D.H. Cole, "Auguste Comte", *Essays in Social Theory*, (London, Oldbourne Book Co., 1962), pp. 157-69, points out that there are two Comte. The first Comte is revealed in his *A Program for Scientific Work required for the Reorganisation of Society* (May 1822), and *Positive Philosophy*. John Stuart Mill favoured this Comte. The second Comte is revealed in his *Positive Polity* wherein, on the top of sociology, he put a further study of morals and expounded the "Religion of Humanity".

in the fourteenth century there had been the replacement of the theological by the metaphysical method.

Apparently Gandhi's possible quest for the synthesis of the theological, the metaphysical and the scientific-positive methods may appear rather confusing. How can the belief in Karma, rebirth, inner voice, and providential guidance be reconciled with the mechanical, objectivistic, value-neutral attitude of modern physical and natural science ? But Gandhi did achieve some kind of synthesis of moral religion (Niti Dharma), philosophic contemplation and scientific attitude in his own personal life. Persons who had intimate personal contacts with him have testified to the fact that he had achieved a kind of synthesis and deep integration of the different phases and aspects of his personality. The point is that like Thomas Aquinas, Gandhi believed in two fundamental levels of reality. The eternal spiritual order could be fathomed by the method of faith and daily prayers while the temporal domain is amenable to the grasp of reason and science. There may remain some confusion, however, in Gandhi's thought for those who deny the reality of a transcendent real. But for those who accept the spiritual standpoint the only sane view is to plead for a comprehensive synthesis between the theological, the metaphysical and the positive methods. Thus the sacred realms of the beyond will be the field of religious and spiritual faith while the secular realm of the mundane will be amenable to the scientific grasp of immanent and inexorable natural laws. Thus Gandhi tried to combine the transcendental and the secular in his life and teachings. If he would pray and contemplate for some time, the next hour or so would be given to sanitation and cleanliness. If in matters touching the soul and God, Gandhi would rule out dialectical discussion, on problems of national politics, village economics, communal harmony etc., he would listen to arguments, weigh the pros and cons of alternative suggestions, would himself observe the field of action and would take his steps after rational deliberation. To the solution of the specific social, economic and political problems he would bring an attitude and outlook amenable to positive rational debates.

### **3. The Religion of Humanity**

There is a strong humanitarian standpoint in both Gandhi and Comte. Gandhi was a very great national leader and fighter for *Swaraj*, but he would consider human prosperity and happiness to be a matter of superior concern. He considered no person to be an adversary or foe. Hence beyond the majesty of the nation and the imperialism of the despotic state he looked to the ideal of perpetual brotherhood. He would have refused to regard the nation-state as the rational expression of the world-spirit. For him, the political entities were not immanent with a superior reason but indicated the failings and weaknesses of the persons who handled them.

Towards the latter part of his life, Comte became a protagonist of the 'religion of humanity'. As a young man, he had broken from St. Simon when the latter began to talk of the "New Christianity". But in his later life, Comte began to dream of himself being the High Priest of the new Church of Humanity. This Church of Humanity, as conceived by Comte, is a non-theological autonomous spiritual agency. It is not itself to be a determinate governing body but has to offer advice to the secular rulers. Through the control of education it is to make its influence felt.

Comte was a believer in the Christian concept of Love.<sup>8</sup> His significance lies in the fact that he has attributed the character of a socially reconstructing agency to this concept of love. He regarded love as the principle of the positivist society and believed in the necessity of moral force based on affection.<sup>9</sup>

Comte thought that women symbolised moral force and they had an important part to play in the reconstruction of society. He regarded Mariolatry which became prevalent in the phase of Defensive Monotheism (or the second phase of Monotheism, the first being Social Monotheism) and Catholic-feudal transition as the prelude to the emancipation of the female sections in Western Europe. Gandhi regarded the woman as the mother and the embodiment of sacrifice, suffering and love,<sup>10</sup> and hence he urged that women had to assume leadership for the moral emancipation of humanity. The social leadership of women would, perhaps, be a deterrent to the encroachments of masculine arrogance, brutality, impetuosity, fury, passion and depravity.

The supreme concern of both Gandhi and Comte was with the renaissance of ego-neutralizing and altruistic virtues for the uplift of mankind. They stood for universal love and positive beneficence. At a time when the irrational gospel of nuclear war among nations is being sometimes openly and sometimes secretly preached, the emphasis on the humanitarian element in Gandhism and Comteanism is to be regarded as a welcome addition to world political philosophy.

#### **4. Critique of Capitalism : Moral Transformation**

Both Gandhi and Comte are critics of the capitalist system of production. Both criticized the iniquities of capitalism at a time when the capitalist economy had not yet become the dominant aspect of the total economy in their respective countries, that is India and

8 Comte, *System of Positive Polity*, Vol. I, p. 257 : "Love, then, is our principle ; Order our basis ; and Progress our end." He also refers to the "inspiring charm of social sympathy."

9 Comte visualises a synthesis of, (a) the intellect of the philosopher, (b) the enthusiasm of the poet, (c) the tenderness of woman, and (d) the energy of the people. See *System of Positive Polity*, Vol. I, p. 256.

10 M. K. Gandhi, "The Place of Woman", *Harijan*, February 24, 1940.

France and that indicates their realism. Gandhi was opposed to capitalism because exploitation in any form is the neutralization of *Ahimsa*.

Comte was critical of the hypocrisy of the French bourgeoisie that had brought about the Revolution in France and was the force behind the authority of Louis Phillippe. He condemned the use of capital for the suppression of the legitimate demands of the proletariat. Like Gandhi, Comte also stated that the growth of machines had increased the burdens of the masses. Hence he wanted that a positive social morality should be promoted and the richer sections should consider themselves the guardians and not the masters of social capital. He pleaded that the owning classes should arrange for common moral education and secure work for all. He earnestly believed that for a political and social reconstruction it was essential to bring about a moral and intellectual renaissance which would be fostered by the priesthood of the positive order. He did not regard paternalistic legislation by the state to be adequate.

The moral approach to the solution of social and economic problems as indicated by Gandhi and Comte has to be stressed in the modern world. The dispossession of the richer sections by force and violence may not always be the proper remedy. Gandhi was right in his insight that armed force does not really provide any solution. It may merely give an immediate semblance of solution. But the very same sections who have dispossessed one sector, soon assume power and self for themselves and henceforth begins a fresh period of political and economic tyranny for the masses. Thus forcible expropriation and violent revolution are not the proper methods because they create a vicious circle of counter-hatred. Hence Gandhi and Comte are right in stressing a conscious adoption of the moral values and norms. Ethical relativism and the abjuration of moral norms are full of devastating consequences for the health and stability of the social structure. Today it has become a fashion with some socialists and communists to ridicule any talk about morality as an infiltration of opportunism, muddleheadedness and conservatism. They have the boldness to characterize the champions of an ethical approach as the apologists of the ascendant classes and the enemies of the plebian strata. This is downright falsehood and blasphemy. There is no ground for doubting the sincerity of the opponents of ethical teleology. The vicious trade in human blood that has been carried on in the name of conceptual ghosts and fantastic abstractions like the white man's burden, Teutonic myth, classless society, democratic centralism, dictatorship of the proletariat (which should really be called the dictatorship of the agents of the politbureau), accentuation of production etc., should make genuine democrats thoroughly vigilant and alert. The peril to liberty from covert fascism, planned regimentation and totalitarian collectivism is imminent. Hence it is

essential to work out a moral renaissance and spiritual ennoblement of mankind as indicated by Gandhi and Comte.

### 5. Agrarianism

There is a deep element of agrarian concern in both Gandhi and Comte. Gandhi's heart-felt deep agony and excruciating pain to see the misery of the Indian villagers. He himself lived like a farmer and a weaver in order to express emotional identification with the suppressed sections. The non-achievement of any marked rise in the standard of living of the "mute millions" demands a thought regarding the benefits of planning in India. It is true that the problems are grave indeed. It is essential to defend national liberty and territorial integrity. For that is needed militarization. To support the military expansion is needed the considerable development of heavy industries and defence industries. This colossal industrialization cannot be done with India's slender resources of capital formation. Hence we have to depend ever more on foreign aid and also have to go on tightening our belts to make savings. This entire process appears to be a never-ending operation. Economists and statisticians may consider the destitution of the masses due to the exorbitant rise in price as a necessary "strain" for building the base and structure of a strong economy, but the problems of putting some additional money in the pockets of the consumers is also, indeed, a formidable problem demanding immediate solution. One cannot afford to neglect the poor agriculturists.

Auguste Comte certainly did not go as far in his concern for the rural sections as Gandhi did. But he also had a desire to raise the status of the agriculturists and hence he admitted them (the agriculturists) to the employer class along with bankers, merchants and manufacturers. Thus, they also were to share in wielding industrial or material power and in the exercise of the functions of civil government.

The modern world is fast becoming more and more oriented to industry. Industry is being stressed to strengthen the military might of nations, to support an increasing standard of living and material comforts, to expand the constituents of civilization and to remove the pressure on land (especially in the eastern countries). But Gandhi was a supporter of thorough agrarianism. He wanted India to develop as an agricultural nation. In view of the great threats to our political liberty and to our territorial integrity from our neighbours and also for making available the benefits of a materialistic civilization to our population which for centuries has lived on the barest minimum, I do think that India should be an advanced industrial nation. But in the meantime agriculture should not suffer. When due to food scarcity people will die of starvation, steel mills and coal godowns will not come to our rescue. We cannot for ever go on soliciting supplies of wheat from Canada, the United States

and Australia. Hence self-sufficiency in food is the most vital requirement of the country. A systematic philosophy of and an elaborate technic for the expansion of agricultural productivity which will solve the food problems of the country without leading to soil erosion is urgently needed.

## 6. Differences in the Theory of the Social Structure

There are some differences with regard to the criteria of social reconstruction in Gandhi and Comte. From his earlier days Gandhi accepted the sociology of Vedic *Varnashrama*. He thought of it as a non-intercompetitive, functional organisation of society oriented to the attainment of the harmony of the community without there being any sense of constraint and domination from the so-called upper sections. He was perceptive enough, however, to recognize the grave social evils with which this loose organisation had become encumbered in the course of its historical degeneration in the form of the caste. He pleaded for the restoration of the essential functional principle on which it was originally based—the elimination of competition and the realization of the common good in proportion to one's family heritage and psychological attainments and faculties (*Samskara*). There are indications that towards the end of his life he said that in his perfectionist scheme of Ramrajya there would be no place for a non-egalitarian structure based on castes and classes.

Comte, to the contrary, accepted the concept of hierarchical organisation of society.<sup>11</sup> He wanted that specialization of function should be the basis of the future society. There were to be three socially important classes : the Priests (representing speculation or intellectual authority), the Women (representing affection or moral force) and the Leaders of industry or war (representing action or material force). Below them were to be the people who were to be bound to these basic classes by social and moral ties. Thus while Gandhi (at least towards the end of his life) accepted the concept of an almost undifferentiated social structure, Comte adhered to the theory of a social hierarchy. The stress on distinct moral individua-

11 The structure of the leadership-hierarchy of the positive society can be thus represented :

### Positive Society

<b>Priests.</b> They have <i>capacite positive</i> . They provide intellectual and moral control based on courage, prudence and perseverance. There are to be 20,000 priests for western Europe, 7 national chief priests and 1 High Priest of Humanity	<b>Industrial Leaders.</b> They have <i>capacite industrielle</i> . They provide material control. They consist of :— (a) Bankers ; (b) Manufacturers ; (c) Merchants ; and (d) Agriculturists.
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lity is far stronger in Gandhi than in Comte.<sup>12</sup> Hence while Gandhi was a prophet of relentless non-violent resistance to all forms of tyranny and domination, Comte stressed the aspects of conformity and social order.<sup>13</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

Gandhi was a product of the semi-urbanized and semi-commercialized Hindu society of Porbandar and was, basically, a saint and prophet. Comte came from the Catholic background of France proud of its Latin culture. He was primarily a great social thinker and accepted the positivist trends of the scientific civilization of the west. But regardless of the differences in their background, outlook and methodologies, both have taught the cult of the incorporation of moral values in the texture of human civilization. No one can afford to be resigned to the fate of human civilization. The quest of *Real-politik* has brought us on the top of a precipice. The spectre of atomic annihilation is haunting the world today. Hence the plea of Gandhi and Comte for the realization of sanity, sobriety, decency and civility demands thoughtful consideration making imperative a change in the conduct of our economic and political relations. Both stress that men have to be consciously moulded into becoming moral animals. Therein lies their eminent and abiding contribution to the ennoblement of mankind.

12 It is true, however, that in the positive period, Comte hoped for the replacement of the state by a group of cities owing allegiance to Humanity.

13 The failure of Comte to put adequate stress on individual liberty may be due to his Catholic background. His attachment to organic hierarchy made him an "anti-individualist".

# 17

## GANDHI AND MARX

[ *An Introduction to the Critique of the Political Philosophies of Mohandas Gandhi and Karl Marx.* ]

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### 1. Introduction

Our country today is seized with grave economic and political perils. We have also lost faith in our old moral values and spiritual norms. The tremendous moral and spiritual forces which were released by the personality of Gandhi are declining. The presence of rampant corruption, food crises due to hoarding and black money, the growing dominance of money in winning elections and for maintaining oneself in power, party struggles,—all these are eloquent testimonies to the fact that in post-Gandhian India, the old idealism of the prophet is withering away. We are now more careful for expediency. In some quarters we are busy imitating the west. The colossal supremacy of the western industrialized countries has always been, for the last one hundred and fifty years, a factor creating at the sub-conscious level, a predilection in the minds of Asians, in favour of political and social philosophies originating in the west. The dynamic social transformations in the Soviet Union and the eastern European countries and the military preparedness of China have predisposed some people towards some form of communism or people's democracy or other new forms like guided or basic democracy. Hence, intellectually, we are in a confused state. Because of intellectual opaqueness we are not clear and firm about the course of our future action. The important problem is—how shall our country become a powerful and vital sphere of political and economic existence. Marxism, because of its success in some countries appears to be assuming the character of a prophetic dispensation. Hence for us all, and specially for the intellectuals, it is necessary, once more, to discuss the fundamentals of political philosophies. There are several creeds and cults engaging our attention. The western democratic equalitarianism is one, and politically we are committed to that. There is the general prevalent belief that this political form is suited to the institutional realization of the moral idealism of Gandhian political philosophy. There is also the socialistic formula with its combination of democracy and the economic plans

for full employment, material plenty and its righteous distribution. Communism is fashionable in some circles and although it indulges in occasional quotations from Marx and Engels, it, basically, is inspired by the plans and formulae of Soviet Russia and lately, new China.

No philosophy of history can be separated from the impact of the personality of the original creator of that system. Gandhi was not an academic theoretician but that does not detract from his importance. He was a moral prophet and leader. He was not a dialectician like Nagarjuna, Dignaga and Bradley. Nevertheless, he has written at a stupendous scale.

Marx was trained in the traditions of German left-wing Hegelian metaphysics. He believed in the efficacy of logical reason and for over thirty years he laboured and toiled persistently to finish his system although the basic insights that he worked out into his theory were felt and perceived by 1848. In 1883, F. Engels eulogized Marx as the "greatest living thinker" and compared him to Darwin. Even Albion Small, the Chicago sociologist, rated his significance to be as momentous as that of Newton for physics. There is no doubt that Marx had deep scholarship in the social sciences. Gandhi has influenced people through his pen and his sermons, but, above all, the attractive personality of the gentle prophet and undaunted leader always evoked a feeling of respect from many quarters. But while Gandhi was generous even to his opponents, Marx was a perpetual fighter. He engaged in bitter and furious polemics with Proudhon, the Bauer brothers, Edgar and Bruno, with the German "true socialists", with Lassalle and Bakunin. He was an aggressive personality, always conscious of his towering intellectual strength, which, he thought, because of false and perverse consciousness, the contemporary Philistines failed to recognize and appreciate. His passion for Germanic scholarly thoroughness is apparent in his works and most so in the three volumes of the ponderous *Das Kapital* and the gigantic *Theories of Surplus Value*.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Metaphysical Idealism versus Dialectical Materialism

Gandhi sincerely and thoroughly believed in an omnipresent, omniscient, infinite, timeless reality which could be called *Sachchidananda*.

1 A communist scholar, N. Bukharin, *Marxism and Modern Thought*, p. 7, has thus paid tributes to the intellectual genius of Karl Marx : "On the basis of an astonishingly complete acquaintance with all disciplines, on the basis of an obstinate study of modern natural science, from mathematics to geology, of an exceptional acquaintance with the literature and history of all ages and all peoples, of stubborn original work upon primary sources, of a first class knowledge of world literature and world art, Marxism grew as the all-embracing system of ideas of a titanic class, formed by the titanic genius of Marx." Marx had some knowledge of astronomy and physics and had read Grove and Tyndal. But I doubt if non-Marxist scientists will be willing to acknowledge Marx's "independent researches in chemistry" (*Marxism and Modern Thought*, pp. 139 ff.) as maintained by the devoted Marxists.

*dananda* or Rama or simply Truth.<sup>2</sup> He inherited the strong faith in the existence of a spiritual real from his Vaishnava family. The writings of Tolstoy, and his studies of Buddha's life and the Gita and his contacts with the Jaina teacher, Raychand Bhai, deepened and strengthened his convictions. Hence, Gandhi was a spiritual idealist, but not of the non-dualistic school. His views are similar to those of the modified monistic and pure non-dualistic interpreters of Vedanta and the Vaishnava saints but without the open advocacy of incarnation of God, idol-worship and religious ceremonialism. The spiritual truth, according to him, was to be realized not by logical ingenuity, discursive analysis or conceptual categorization but by inner spiritual experience, pure, heavenly-minded and God-fearing life and by the persistent endeavour to concretize the standard of *Ahimsa* in one's life and action. Thus we find a synthesis of Vedantic metaphysics and Jaina-Buddhistic ethics in Gandhi. He claimed that the more disciplined, holier and purer he became, the more did he approximate to the realization of Truth as God. The great prophets, mystics and religious teachers have testified to the inward experience of some eternal values and the absolute spiritual real. Gandhi did not negate syllogistic arguments and practical observation. He even claimed to be a genuine scientist in the sense that he constantly experimented with truth and tried to make his propositions sounder by repeated observations. But this scientific and rational process of enquiry was only applicable to the spatiotemporal dimensions of the world. His faith in a fundamental Truth was born not out of syllogistic and demonstrative arguments but out of intuition, faith and spiritual experience.

Marx, on the other hand, was a rationalist. Mysticism and faith were anathema to him. Idealistic philosophy, according to him, tried to hypostatize the functional products of human brain and thus exalted mind-born ideas as the Absolute Idea and the Demiurgus of the world. He flourished in the era of Biblical criticism and wanted to unravel the secrets of the cosmos by sole reference to reason and science. He was inspired by the materialistic tradition of Democritus, Epicurus, Hobbes, Holbach, and Feuerbach and felt delight in the application of the dialectical methodology of German philosophy to social sciences. According to the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels, nature, society and the human brain moved and functioned, as if, in a process of incessant flux and dynamic motion. There was no static motionless ultimate reality. Marxists have repudiated Parmenides' theory of "One Being" in favour of the Heraclitean concept of flux and have propounded the three laws of the dialectic—(a) the transformation of quantity into quality and

2 Mahatma Gandhi's article in *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, (ed. J. H. Muirhead and S. Radhakrishnan).

*vice versa*, (b) the interpenetration of opposites, and (c) the negation of the negation, on the basis of Hegel's *Science of Logic*.<sup>3</sup>

The difficulty for the critic regarding the choice between Marxian materialism and Gandhian idealism centres on the inscrutable nature of the ultimate reality. Both the camps of idealism are advancing new arguments and recruiting new protagonists. Croce, Gentile, Cohen, Green, Sri Aurobindo, Royce etc., propound idealism, and religious people even draw sustenance from the popular writings of Eddington, Jeans, Millikan etc. They laud Jeans' view of a mathematical creator of the universe, exalt Hans Driesch's views of the immortality of the soul and stress the notion of the mystery of the organic continuum. Holism, subjectivism and Whitehead's organic theory are also given honourable place in the idealist citadel. The advocates of materialism, also put their own favourable interpretations on positivism, critical and new realism, quantum mechanics etc.

Despite Engels' belief that the progressive march of science would transform the Kantian things-in-themselves into things-for-us, we still find that science cannot answer the question either of the final destiny of man or of the primitive process of the emergence of the world. Whether we accept Haeckel's matter or Bergson's *Elan Vital* or Alexander's primal space-time as the ultimate reality, is ultimately dependent on some kind of faith. Even after the researches into the field of electro-magnetism and atomic fission, it is mainly a matter of faith to accept that the motions in the nuclear sphere have ultimately generated through qualitative transformations the mighty flower of the human brain. Is it anything but mysticism to accept that ultimately out of matter in motion or out of space-time, all the great achievements in the fields of science and art have come out? If it is the example of primitive unsophisticated faith to believe in the creation of this universe—this either 'vale of tears' or the best of all possible worlds, by the fiat of an omniscient being or to consider it as the self-manifestation of an Absolute in search of self-consciousness and delight, it is no less a mysticism and no less primitive to accept that the qualitatively different dialectical motion of the ultimate material reality is sometimes transformed into the minds of a Plato or an Aristotle or a Christ or a Leonardo or a Darwin or a Napoleon or that sometimes the ultimate material reality decides at a primordial sacred hour to create protoplasmic life on the basis of material configurations and arrangements and at another pristine hour it made possible the emergence of man from the anthropoid ape. Hence I strongly think that the acceptance of

<sup>3</sup> I have undertaken a detailed and critical analysis of the sociological, economic and epistemological foundations of Marxism in my Columbia University thesis (1948) entitled *Essays in Dialectical Materialism*. This thesis is incorporated in V. P. Varma, *Political Philosophy*, (Agra, Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, 1970).

any conception about the ultimate reality involves faith and primitive belief. The origination and processes of the cosmos cannot be entirely satisfactorily explained—neither by the Vedanta, nor by the Nebular hypothesis of Kant nor by the dialectical materialism of Marx. Any view that we uphold is vitally influenced by our childhood and adolescent experiences in life, and by the subtle interactions of faith, predilections, the subconscious memories and by the environmental influences and other factors.

But although this question of the origin of the universe or the final destiny of things cannot be settled either by science or by any system of philosophy, it does not mean that we have to become nihilists. At least both the camps of idealism and materialism are agreed that we have to live on the earth and live happily. For the creation of a more decent future society, it is my contention that idealism provides deeper ethical insight and more solid faith. When we accept that the Spirit is the ultimate reality, we obtain an increased faith in the creative capacity of man as a mode or aspect of Spirit. Man as a moral subject containing in himself the reflection of an eternal spiritual consciousness receives an enhanced status. As a spirit, he can rise superior to nature and can by the collective use of his rational and moral powers, attempt, at least partly, to control the blind forces of an alien and mechanical necessity. Through reflective consciousness and contemplation he can attempt to go beyond the dull repetitions of external nature.

Idealism has one advantage over materialism in that it offers at least some consolation in times of agonies, torments and despair. We also get the assurance of immortality, moral freedom and the conservation of the spiritual consciousness. Idealism in metaphysics also encourages philosophies of social and political concord and harmony as, for example, we find in the Gandhian political theory. Hence on grounds of ethical, social and pragmatic consequences also metaphysical idealism has great value for mankind. But when I am arguing along these lines, I do not mean to deny the value of physical science. Science has remarkable achievements to its credit in the fields of cosmology, physics, chemistry and industrial technology. I am only saying that science cannot shed any definite light on the ultimate origin of the universe or on the final destiny of the finite self.

### **3. Ethical Absolutism versus Ethical Relativism**

Gandhi accepted spiritual idealism, but unlike the Vedantic exponents of *Mayavada*, he believed in the supremacy of ethical absolutism. The Gandhian theory of ethical absolutism can be traced to the Vedic concept of the *Rita* or the doctrine that there are all-governing cosmic and moral ordinances which govern both men and gods. The *Rita* is not a precept of human reason nor an injunction of a human physical superior. It is a cosmic law immanent in the

very structure of the universe. The *Brihadaranyaka* and *Chandogya-Upanishads* and the *Mahabharata* also conceive of truth as almost a primordial and ubiquitous norm. Mahavira, Buddha and Jaimini also adhered to the existence of a cosmic moral Order of Dharma. Patanjali in his *Yoga-Sutras* propounded that the fundamental concepts of the five *Yamas* and the five *Niyamas* transcended the domain of ether, space and time. Gandhi must have been aware of these insights. His personal experiences, studies and thought also convinced him of the categorically binding character of the moral laws. Hence he considered truth and non-violence to be absolutely and categorically binding. Thus it is clear that Gandhi's concept of truth and non-violence being eternal values and absolutely binding on all persons is completely immune from the charge of religion being a reactionary gospel or a mask for protecting the interests of the power-holders. Marxism, on the other hand, accepts the relativism of the moral criteria and regards ethical codes as the products of our social growth.<sup>4</sup> There are no eternal and moral principles and the ethical system is relative to the relations of production. The Marxian theory of ethical relativism receives support from the researches of the social sciences. The growth of historical sociology and cultural anthropology substantiates the notion of the relativism of the ethical standards and our judgments of moral value.

This question of ethical absolutism versus ethical relativism is indeed fundamental. On one side we find Buddha, Kant and Gandhi preaching the absolute sanctity of the moral norms and on the other we find historicists, sociologists and anthropologists standing for the relativism of even the most sacred ideas about human relations. It is certainly true that we find differences in the moral conceptions of an African Bushman, a western European professor and a Hindu sage. But to argue therefrom that all ethical standards being relative, one does not have to worry seriously about them, is unfounded. Even in the lowest specimens of human civilization, we find some crude and dim conceptions of good. We may find, from the historical and social standpoints, differences in the various societies with regard both to the conceptions and objective concretizations of good, but

F. Engels : *Anti-Duhring*, (New York, International Publishers, 1939), pp. 104-05 : "We therefore reject every attempt to impose on us any moral dogma whatsoever as an eternal, ultimate and for ever immutable moral law on the pretext that the moral world too has its permanent principles which transcend history and the differences between nations. We maintain, on the contrary, that all former moral theories are the product, in the last analysis, of the economic stage which society had reached at that particular epoch. And as society has hitherto moved in class antagonisms, morality was always a class morality."

Engels, however, visualises the evolution of a really human morality. "A really human morality which transcends class antagonisms and their legacies in thought becomes possible only at a stage of society which has not only overcome class contradictions but has even forgotten them in practical life."—*Anti-Duhring*, p. 105.

that only shows that they are partial approximations to some objective categories of good and truth. It is correct that some moral conceptions are socially conditioned and may be regarded as maxims of adjustment with the situation. They may be viewed as proximate rules of the game. But some moral values like truth, justice, tolerance, compassion etc., have a more lasting character. They may have been discovered or intuited upon in course of time but their significance is abiding. According to biological researches man is an evolutionary product of the last one million years. Hence the values formulated by man cannot be absolute in the sense of spatiotemporal infinity. But they are absolute in a teleological sense. They have reference to the human being as an idealized entity who, as a normative entity, transcends time. Hence the moral concepts have an absolutist foundation only in this teleological sense.

As human beings, wherever we may be, we have to progress towards the realization of the objective truth and good and not to attempt to destroy through intellectual sophistries the foundations of truth, honesty and justice. The theory of moral universalism and absolutism, as restated by Gandhi, is significant for world thought. We do not advance the cause of human moral evolution when we merely attempt the sociological analysis of the genesis of justice and truth and consider them only as the ideological safeguards of a particular entrenched social class or interest in power. For strengthening the moral foundations of a human commonwealth, the Gandhian theory of ethical absolutism is more suited than the ethical relativism of Marxism. May be that the charge of being unrealistic will be levelled against me. But as decent human beings, and not as mere objective social scientists, we do not have to postulate the rules of social and political expediency as our guides. We have, to the contrary, to postulate an ethical code suited to man as essentially a spiritual entity and commensurate with his subjective stature. Without being ethereal, it can be said that when Gandhi advises his compatriots and others that even with our so-called enemies we have to behave according to the canons of justice, truth and non-violence, he is not being unmindful of the challenges and demands of the social reality. We have to re-think on Gandhian lines in a nuclear age. The great moral prophets of Buddhism, Stoicism and Christianity have certainly helped in the regeneration and moralisation of man's untamed, self-satisfied and egoistic propensities. Gandhi belongs to this group of moral thinkers and his teachings, undoubtedly, have great value.

But in spite of differences between the theoretical standpoints of the two teachers it must be pointed out that in their personal lives and careers both were fundamentally idealists. Both believed in the values of freedom, progress and emancipation of the suppressed strata. Both were men of solid character and nothing—favour or

frown, fear or temptation, could make them compromise with what they considered vital principles of their life.

#### 4. Religion as a Factor in History

Gandhi recognized the potency of religion in human history. Although he called himself a Hindu, he was no narrow dogmatic sectarian. Like Buddha and Ramakrishna, he had transcended the limited bounds of creeds, cults, rituals and ceremonies. He accepted the moral essence of Hinduism which, according to him, was also the inherent essence of all the great religions of mankind as, for example, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism. Religion, according to Gandhi, implied a dominant quest for and experience of the moral values. It alone could provide the dynamic inspiration to dedicated selfless action. He said that he was in quest of *Moksha*—redemption and emancipation of the soul from the clutches of *Maya*. But salvation to Gandhi did not signify retreat into the care on the cloister. Nor did it mean the negation of the demands of the community and the human fraternity. A holy, devoted life implied the spontaneous acceptance of social obligations and the fulfilment of the duties that naturally came one's way. In the spirit of the Gita, he felt that performed with a sense of detachment and disinterestedness, the life of *Karmayoga* could lead to the attainment of moral freedom and spiritual *Moksha*. A life of duteous and honorable occupation is never supposed to generate egoism, but leads to a progressive extension of the human self till it comes to comprehend within its brotherly embrace almost humanity itself. *Karmayoga* or *Pravritti-Marga*, thus, is an active path of life for the widening of consciousness and that signifies a deep spiritual uniting vision. Thus when Gandhi talked of the religious basis of politics he was preaching neither primitivism nor dogmatic scholasticism nor theocratic papalism or sacerdotalism, but a life of strenuous dynamic pursuit to 'calling' in quest of the good of one's soul and mankind. Detached active dedication to the cause of collective good is the essence of *Karmayoga*. Passivity, frustrated resignation and a complacent acceptance of the *status quo* are absolutely far from it. Gandhi accepted the Biblical precept that it is better to lose the world than to lose one's soul. Religion, as *Karmayoga*, is the assertion of the superiority of the claims of the spirit to those of temporal fluctuations. In the present technocratic and mechanical phase of human civilization with its stress on the hedonistic calculus and the economics of felicity, self-interest and the satisfaction of needs and wants, Gandhi's conception of *Karmayoga* is an assertion of the ethics of self-abnegation.

While Gandhi considered religion as the spiritual nourishment of his soul and used to say that he could live without food but not without prayer, Marx in one of his early papers on "The Jewish Question" published in 1844, denounced religion as "the opium" of

the people. To the end of his life, he felt that religion results in confusion and mystifies issues. Dialectical materialism considers religion to be a reactionary force. Religion, according to Engels, contains remnants of antiquated anthropomorphic conceptions of the primitive period. The ghosts and gods of a dead past and the deities of a polytheistic pantheon are enshrined by religion, in place of attempting for the growth of clear and definite scientific knowledge. Moreover, it is regarded as irrational because it teaches the fantastic cult of the fetishism of one's own mental creations. One's own vague notions and reactions are raised to the status of the Absolute Idea or God and are subsequently believed to be the creators of the material reality, although, actually speaking, it is in the context of the material reality that they have emerged. Religion also substitutes the empty futuristic chiliastic consolation of resurrection and immortality for the present subjection to misery, exploitation and oppression. At times it is also used as a hypocritical device, and bishops and priests, because most often they are in alliance with the temporal powers, preach vague but glorious gospels of eternity, salvation and the kingdom of God as a compensation for the miseries of the suppressed strata. Generally, Marx and Engels preach that religion is an ideology fitted to the production relations of the time.<sup>5</sup> It is also asserted that with the dawn of the society of freedom, abundance and equality, based on the utilization of the knowledge of science, man would not need the consolations of religion. Thus religious subservience to the blind forces of capital would be replaced by the triumphant victory of positive science. At that fateful moment religion and transcendental and metaphysical philosophy will not be needed at all.

Religion in its institutionalized and historical phases does contain formulae of compromise with the powers that be. The orthodox Russian church supported Czardom. In the Middle Ages, Christianity under the pretentious leadership of the medieval popes fought secular battles. Islam sometimes offered only two alternatives—conversion or the sword. Hinduism often has sanctioned the grossest superstitions and defended iniquitous social tyrannies on the lower castes. But despite all these and many more vital shortcomings, religion, in its true essence, has stood for the supremacy of the human spirit. It has sought to provide a rationale and metaphysical foundation for our moral endeavours and has tried to interpret the meaning of human existence perpetually exposed to the agonies of

5 "The religious world is but the reflex of the real world. And for a society based upon the production of commodities, in which the producers in general enter into social relations with one another by treating their products as commodities and values, whereby they reduce their individual private labour to the standard of homogeneous human labour—for such a society, Christianity with its *cults* of abstract man, more specially in its bourgeoisie developments, Protestantism, Deism etc., is the most fitting form of religion."—*Capital*, (Chicago ed.), Vol. I, p. 91.

death in a coherent fashion. Certainly we do not want false creeds. We have to condemn religious inquisitions but we do need the religious spirit of tolerance, mutual reciprocal intersubjective goodwill, faith in the victory of truth, peace and justice.

Religion is essential for the human being.<sup>6</sup> He cannot get rid of it. It is almost incongruous to believe in the worth and victory of the human spirit and its powers of free moral creativism and to totally repudiate religion. Religion provides the spiritual foundations to our social and political existence. Both democracy and socialism are, in their roots and foundations, intensely religious movements notwithstanding their professed creeds of secularism and science. If democracy has to succeed, it cannot be merely as an institutional mechanism making possible the registering of votes and at stated time-intervals. Democracy is based on the sanctity of the human personality and faith in the rational and moral powers of man. Democratic values postulate decency and justice and, ultimately, only religion can provide them. It should not also be forgotten that in the teachings of the seventeenth century Puritans like the Independents and the Anabaptists are the origins of democracy<sup>7</sup> to be traced. It is not insignificant that Mannheim, Laski and Croce reiterate the need for faith and moral values for the working of the democratic system.

Socialism may also be regarded as a religion trying to realise on earth the old religious promise of the rule of God's justice for all. Socialism, in this sense, represents the secularization of the teachings of the Bible. Gehrlich, Sombart, Eduard Heimann, A. Toynbee, N. Berdyaev, etc., have referred to the presence of religious elements in Marxism and have regarded it as the partial secularization of Jewish-Christian theology and eschatology for these reasons: (i) The old Jewish messianism has now been replaced by a proletarian messianism and the old cult of the saviour has now been substituted by the concept of the proletariat as the deliverer of humanity. (ii) Schumpeter has elaborated the role of "Marx as a prophet."<sup>8</sup> Marx's denunciations remind one of the old Jewish prophets and not modern social analysts. (iii) The technological-economic interpretation of history incorporates an element of "determinism" and a belief in the final triumph of the proletariat class. These notions of determinism and faith in ultimate victory are in the religious tradition.

Only true religion accepting the spiritual potentialities of man can provide the morally dynamic impetus to social and poli-

6 Cf. A.N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, N. Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit*. F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies*.

7 A.D. Lindsay, *The Modern Democratic System*, (Oxford University Press, 1951), Vol. I, pp. 117-20.

8 Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, (New York, Harper & Bros., 1947), 2nd edition, pp. 5-8.

tical action. Religion postulates the spiritual and moral wholeness of attitude-integration. Human life is a unity and it cannot be fragmentalized. Without the genuine religious spirit of sharing, no socialism can succeed. It will degenerate into collective egois, bloody revolutions, violence and the myth of the socio-economic ultimates. The religious spirit demands self-sacrifice, mutual love, dedication and surrender to the higher law of the Spirit and it is unrealistic to accept that a mere change in the political and institutional structure will bring the millenium. History is not merely the record of the divergent forces of production and socio-economic organisations fighting and realizing a temporary compromise, but it is, truly speaking, the record of the activities of the mind of man. In the Gandhian spirit, modern statesmen and theoreticians have accepted in the Human Rights Charter that war originates in the minds of men. Religion can transform the mind of man, not by some theocratic sanction or supernormal hypnosis, but by suggestion, moral persuasion and exalting the inspiring characters of religious heroes. Hence I hold that the true "ethical religion" is not the opium of the people but really the nectar of mankind.

## 5. Sociology and Economics

In one sense, Gandhi and Marx may be regarded as polar types. Gandhi sponsored an idealist approach to social problems and he regarded the betterment and ennoblement of human nature as the foundation for social amelioration. He reminds us, thus, of St. Augustine, Bonald and De Maistre and the Existentialist philosophers. Marx, on the other hand, had adopted an institutional and sociological approach. He wanted to change the social structure as the prelude to the change of human nature.

Starting from different metaphysical orientations, Gandhi and Marx provide divergent prescriptions for the solution of the social and economic maladies of mankind. The central evils against which Gandhi fought were racialism, imperialism, communalism and untouchability. The problems of labour versus capital were not yet acutely significant for him. In South Africa, he fought against the policies of racial discrimination. In India, as a reformer, he fought against social iniquity and unfairness, political tyrannies and imperialist oppressions. Primarily he was engaged in abolishing the cruel economic and political exploitation of India. Marx fought against the reactionary policies of the Prussian Government, engaged for a time in the Revolutions of 1848, organised and led the First International and concentrated his intellectual energies on bringing about proletarian solidarity. According to Gandhi, the enemy was foreign imperialism, according to Marx, it was bourgeois capitalism.

It will be interesting and revealing to compare Gandhi's Trial Speech (1922) where he refers to the exploitation of the Indian villages by the towns-people and the British imperialists as a "crime

against humanity which is perhaps unparalleled in history," with the denunciations by Marx of the vandalism of capitalism. If Gandhi loved to speak of the "dumb millions" or the "mute millions", Marx used to condemn capital as a vampire that sucks the blood of the workers. But while Marx remained a leader of the proletariat, the saintly Gandhi in his personal life identified himself with the peasants to an extent far greater than the philosopher Marx could ever think of.

Gandhi challenged the foundations of modern civilization. The hedonistic, materialistic and imperialist aspects of modern western civilization repelled him.<sup>9</sup> It was equivalent to darkness and "disease". Gandhi accepted the view of Edward Carpenter that modern civilization is a "disease". Earlier than Spengler, he prophesied the decline and doom of the materialist western civilization but he had tremendous faith in the rejuvenating power of the human spirit. He accepted the gospel of a return to nature like Plato, Rousseau and Tolstoy. Gandhi preached a return to simplicity. In the *Hind-Swaraj* he wrote as an almost absolute ruralist but, in his later writings, it appears that he was only opposed to the perversities of modern imperialism, fascism and the technological instruments of violence.

Marxism grew in the context of the western industrial world. The workers suffering under the injustices of the early years of industrial capitalism found in it a gospel of emancipation. Marx worked out a philosophy of history wherein the forces and relations of production were considered the ultimate determinate of transformations of civilization. Sometimes we find in Marxist writings the equating of "the forces of production" with technology, but most often, this phrase is interpreted in a broad sense. According to Sombart, Masaryk and Hansen, Marxism accepts a technological interpretation of history but Engels, Bernstein, Cunow and Lenin interpret the phrase "forces of production" in a broad sense. History moves through the struggles and strifes of divergent social relations that grow up in correspondence with the forces of production. According to the Marxist logic, history is inexorably moving towards the destruction of the present capitalist society because capitalism engenders in its womb deep and corrosive contradictions that, eventually, lead to its extinction. It is true that capitalism has rendered great services to man. It has released undreamt of productive forces and it has rationalized the technical aspects of commodity production but it has failed to rationalize the relations of production.<sup>10</sup> The private ownership of the means of production produces an irrational social structure characterized by the falling tendency of the

9 Mahatma Gandhi, *Hind-Swaraj*. Also Gandhi's articles collected in *Young India* (in Hindi), 3 volumes.

10 See the Preface to Marx's *Critique of Political Economy*.

rate of profit and the increasing exploitation and "immiserisation" (*Vergewaltigung*) of the working-classes making inevitable the bursting asunder of the capitalist system.<sup>11</sup> Marx did not provide any detailed outline of socialist economics. He mainly appeared as a prophet of the decline of capitalist political economy which he considered full of contradictions because it was based on the profit motive. He claimed to criticise capitalism not on moral grounds which he would have considered utopian but on scientific and rational bases. Capitalism would die because it is infected with the cancer of numerous contradictions. There is the contradiction between concentration and centralization of capital on the one side and the amassing of human misery on the other. There is also contradiction between the simultaneous existence of overproduction and the decennial recurrences of economic crises. Furthermore, there is the contradiction between technological rationality operating in the factory and the chaotic structure of a bipolarized society consisting of expropriators and the expropriated. Hence there is the need of socialism of abundance which will organise the free and equal association of producers based on the augmentation and equitable distribution of social capital. Marx is opposed to the fetishism of commodities which is a characteristic of capitalism and which distorts human relations as relations between lifeless commodities. Furthermore, capitalist society is based on the merciless process of the extortion of surplus value. It is the labouring-class which creates values, but the surplus is appropriated by the exploiters. The detailed and specialized division of labour creates minute areas of action and operation and converts man almost into an automaton who has lost all aesthetic charm in his creative work. Hence this division of labour should be replaced by a system which will produce the multi-sided man. The capitalist practice of calculation in terms of monetary profit should also be replaced by calculation in terms of labour.<sup>12</sup>

Marx's role as a prophet appears in those passages of the first volume of the *Capital* where with bitter passion he mercilessly exposes the vandalism of early colonialism and original capitalist accumulation. He reveals the story of the terror and the havoc let loose on the masses of people by the capitalistic system of industry. Though the labour and the surplus value theories have been unacceptable to

11 For an elaborate discussion of the law of the falling tendency of the rate of profit, see K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, (Chicago ed.), pp. 246-313.

12 Bohm-Bawerk, *Karl Marx and the Close of his System*, (London, 1893), pp. 60-192, tries to show a contradiction between the labour theory of value upheld by Marx in the first volume of *Capital* and the price of production theory upheld by him in the third volume of *Capital*. G.D.H. Cole in *What Marx Really Meant*, and Paul Sweezy in *The Theory of Capitalist Development*, Chapter VII try to minimise and even to repudiate the question of the contradiction but to me it seems that Cole and Sweezy do not succeed in their attempt. For other attacks on Marxism based on theoretical grounds, see Ludwig Von Mises, *Socialism, and Human Action*.

the Austrian marginal utility school of economics, and though the veracity of several of his forecasts like the disappearance of the middle-classes and the outbreak of revolution in industrial countries have proved untrue, still Marx's insights in exposing the defects of a regime of unbridled competition are remarkable. His broad generalisations are correct to the extent that even the supporters of rugged individualism are now compromising with several forms of socialism or social justice or at least a partially socialized economy.<sup>13</sup> Marx's learning in the field of theoretical economics has been testified to even by non-communist economists and it is significant that even an economic historian and theoretician like J. Schumpeter has accepted the truths of some of Marx's analyses.<sup>14</sup> The singular service that Marx has, however, rendered is that his bitter denunciations have been eye-openers to the glaring inequalities and maldistribution of wealth in modern society.

The relation between man and his bread is eternal. His bread may not determine his thought but he must have bread and plenty of that. Both Gandhi and Marx have succeeded because they have busied themselves with providing the solution to this old problem—How everybody will be provided with bread? If, according to Marx, capitalists are robbers because they extract surplus unearned profit, according to the Gandhian commentaries on *Asteya* (non-stealing) anybody, who had more than what he barely needs, is a thief. Marx challenges the theory and practice of capitalist accumulation.<sup>15</sup> Gandhi challenges accumulation in all its shapes.<sup>16</sup> Some of the great prophets in history have been socialists in this sense. Jesus Christ was a socialist and Ramatirtha was a socialist. Dayananda and Vivekananda were socialists because all of them condemned the perversities of wealth and glorified the blessings of poverty. Gandhi emphasized not only the settlement of problems arising out of the iniquities of wealth but he radically wanted to cure even the drive towards avarice and lust which are the chief criminals in creating an unequal society.

The prophetic role of Gandhi and Marx is brought out in their view on labour. Gandhi's advocacy of "bread labour" shows that he sanctified physical labour. Labour for him becomes a means of worshipping God. Marx exalts the concrete physical labour of the workers. Marx, Tolstoy and Gandhi would be almost agreed in thinking that capital is stored labour. Marx states that capital is congealed labour or accumulated labour. In his *What Shall We Do*

13 John Dewey and R.M. MacIver.

14 Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, pp. 39-41.

15 *Capital*, Vol. I, Chapters XXVI to XXXIII. Refer also to *Capital*, Vol. II, Part III, for the discussion of the reproduction and circulation of the aggregate social capital.

16 Refer to the commentary of Mahatma Gandhi on *Asteya* in his booklet *Mangal-Prabhat*.

Then ?, Tolstoy also says that wealth is concentrated labour. Gandhi was not tired of repeating that India's real capital consisted in her working population. He quoted Ruskin and Sir Daniel Hamilton, in support of his view that it is labour that is capital and that living labour is inexhaustible.

Both Gandhi and Marx are opposed to the capitalistic processes of social and economic exploitation, but their emphases are on different points. Gandhi is a moral and spiritual individualist. The individual seeking to better his character by moral technics is the starting-point of Gandhian ethics. Marx, inheriting the Hellenic and the Hegelian traditions of the significance of the collectivity, accepts that not an appeal to the sentiment of justice and individual self-sacrifice but organised expropriation of the expropriators by the armed proletariat would destroy the evils of society, although once or twice he also opined that in England, Holland and America socialism could be brought about by democratic means. Gandhi thinks that the root of the malady is not in the structure of society but in the psychic components of man. Thus, not individual wealth but the individualistic propensity towards the acquisition of wealth is the central devil. Not the accentuation of the production of commodities but the suppression of the drive towards the avaricious accumulation and monopolistic possession of things that may be and are needed by others would bring the millennium. Gandhi is not opposed to institutional changes. He did believe in changes in the structure of society and politics. He did resist the injustices of contemporary institutions. But he would not consider structural changes to be sufficient. Like Buddha, he believed that the hostile antagonist has to be transformed into a friend. Gandhi wanted not only the end of the British regime and of the Indo-British capitalistic and feudal exploitation of people but the final elimination of the sinful desire to exploit. Towards the latter part of his life, a classless society based on mutual active love and harmony was his goal. Marx would have said that the people who hold property do not have any inviolable right to it. Although he would not endorse Proudhon's statement that property is theft, he would think that the capitalistic extortion of surplus is tinged with the blood of the proletariat. Any increase in the commodities constituting capital represents a corresponding extortion of unpaid labour from the working-class. There is no absolute moral right of the capitalist to his wealth and hence there is no justification why the working-class would confine itself to the technics of the "Sermon on the Mount". There is realism in what Marx says. It appeals to our youthful sentiment to get the thing quickly done. Some of us can quote the Bhagavadgita with its doctrine of *Dharmayuddha* or righteous war to support Marx. Asiatic intellectuals may cite the examples of the Russian Revolution and possibly of the Chinese Revolution as indications of the strength of the combined exploited classes under a determined ruthless leadership.

Gandhi condemned violence because in whatsoever a form it may be, it is bound to generate future violence. Thus there is a strong realistic foundation of the Gandhian techniques of the resolution of conflicts through peaceful methods. It is wrong to consider them merely the variants of Owenism. The practical question is : Is violent revolution against the capitalistic class going to succeed ? What guarantee is there that the united workers of U.S.A. will overthrow American capitalism ? I am not pleading that all violence is immoral. I will advocate violence in cases where great interests are at stake, e.g., my personal security or the honour of my family or any other issue of that type. But I feel that it is not advisable to advocate the violent overthrow of the present system because I think that the chances of its success are remote. The modern methods of technology and science have placed immense military power in the hands of the capitalist state and hence if the workers and the peasants advocate forcible overthrow, they will, the chances greatly are, fail. Hence it is not possible to deride as chimerical and visionary the Gandhian technics of organisation, peaceful agitation, non-cooperation and non-violent civil disobedience in the cause of the overthrow of any unjust social, economic and political system. I know of people who advocate that the parties upholding righteous and just causes should have armed power superior to that of the antagonists, who according to them, champions a less just cause. But here also the fundamental question is one of the efficacy and calculations of success of violent means. It is not always possible that the party representing a just cause can have superior armed power. Hence I feel that at least as a policy, although not as a permanent immutable irrevocable creed, Gandhian technics deserve the thoughtful consideration of policy-makers.

## 6. Philosophy of Politics

In a sense, both Gandhi and Marx are anarchists. Gandhi considered the state as an organisation of violence and force. He believed that in the ideal perfectionist society of Ramrajya there will operate the sovereignty of the moral authority of the people and the state as an instrument of concentrated violence would cease to exist. But certainly he could not sanction the immediate destruction of the state power. Increasing perfection of the state through the application of the precepts, methods and technics of non-violent democracy should be the immediate goal although the ultimate aim is moral anarchism conceptualized as Ramrajya.

According to Marx, the capitalistic state would be replaced by the proletarian dictatorship. It would be the first phase of communism. The dictatorship of the proletariat as pointed out by Lenin, would be the highest concentration of state power. It will build the foundations for the ultimate classless society. The commu-

nist society will be the second phase of communism. Since, according to Marx, the state is the child of social exploitation consequent on the growth of commodity production, the socialization of the means of production and the end of private appropriation would mean the withering away of the state.

The idealistic character of both Gandhism and Marxism is apparent in their anarchistic philosophy. Of course, it is very true that distinguished from the Stirner-Bakunin conceptions of anarchism, Marxism does not advocate the deliberate destruction of the state machine but only its gradual withering away. Anarchism represents a reaction against the injustices of the nineteenth century capitalist state. The terrific iniquities of the state system in Russia led to the growth of Russian nihilism and anarchism. Although in the British Godwin, in the American Tucker and in the German Stirner we find anarchistic ideas, still anarchism is a characteristically Russian phenomenon. The anarchistic elements in the theory of Gandhi represent the influence of the moral and religious anarchism of Tolstoy upon him and are not to be traced in the ancient literature of India, as for example, in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata where we find the ideals of the Ramrajya and Dharmarajya as systems of governance, howsoever beneficial. There is no evidence to show any influence of the *Arajaka* system of polity on Gandhian political thought. In a fundamental sense, anarchism has its roots in a religious ideology and its roots go back to the religious condemnation of the state as an institution of sin, consequent upon the fall of man from the state of resplendent grace. The variants of anarchism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are secularized versions of the ancient gospel of the condemnation of the depravities of power. Hence we find that in postulating the final ideal of anarchism, the spiritualist teachings of Gandhi and the materialistic teachings of Marx, to some extent, join hands.

In spite of a common hostility to the iniquities, violence and exploitation practised by the state, Gandhi and Marx enormously differ with regard to their technic of action. While Gandhi stressed holy life in an Ashrama for training in Constructive Programme, and the technics of Satyagraha, Marx emphasized class-solidarity and the propaganda of communist ideology. While Gandhi, to a certain extent, had been influenced by the suffragettes and the Sinn Fein Movement, the Paris Commune of 1871 inspired Marx.

## 7. Philosophy of Freedom

If we reconstruct Gandhi's scattered ideas into a philosophy of history we find that he accepts theological determinism. He said that he literally believed that not a leaf moves without sanction from the divine. To the atheist, this may appear to be an extreme statement. In its exaggerated form, a theological determinism can

lead to Occasionalism.<sup>17</sup> Gandhi believed that in the ultimate sense, God or Truth being the final reality and the omnicompetent being, it was the supreme determinant of things and the governor of the movements in the world. But divine determinism in Gandhi applied only to the ultimate explanation of things. It never degenerated into fatalism. Gandhi was a strong advocate of the strenuous activism and energism of the Gita. His whole life was full of ceaseless actions, all inspired by the religious vision of the realization of God which imparted a comprehensive meaning to his diverse actions as a social worker, a journalist, a political leader and a moral prophet. Gandhi combined an unbounded unshakeable faith in the supremacy of God with the insistence on constant altruistic action. True freedom means realization of the spiritual self or *Atman*. Spiritual and moral freedom for Gandhi lay not in the egoistic assertions of the claims of the selfish, vain and lustful empirical ego but in identification with and obedience to the commands of the spiritual being or Truth. Hence he stressed the rigid adherence to the code of *Mahavarata* (the eleven great vows) in his Ashrama. To Gandhi freedom was a totality or a whole. National freedom (swaraj) from the bondage of alien rulers and exploiters, moral freedom from the slavery passions, and spiritual freedom as the emancipation of the soul were the phases of freedom. To one whose inner life was permeated by the abiding faith in a higher spiritual reality, any compromise with evil and lust and slavery is wrong. Gandhi advocated the practice of simplicity and nature because he held that limitation of wants was necessary for a genuine moral life. He, therefore, opposed large-scale industrialism and mechanization. Gandhi's attitude was comprehensive. To him, freedom was a process of growth in quest of an articulated system of coherent moral duties and purposes and spiritually-oriented actions. A man who obtains freedom over his passions would not tolerate the social and economic exploitation of his country because the citizens thereof are really his own selves. Gandhi's life was a concretization of the great Vedantic and Buddhistic gospel that a man of moral and spiritual realization transcends not only hate and sorrow but also all separatist differences and the consciousness of finite claims and the limited demand of the just apportionment of his selfish dues. Only thus there is the realization of spiritual freedom.

Marx received from the scientific rationalism of the Enlightenment movement in France and Germany the belief in the stupendous power of reasons to create a better society and a happier future for man. To this extent, Marx was a product of the Renaissance spirit. He stated that by harnessing the powers and capacities of the mind, increasing rationalization of the socio-economic process was possible.

17 Malebranche (1638-1715) was an Occasionalist who upheld that God determines bodily movements corresponding to mental processes. Thus the permanent causal efficacy of God is posited in this system.

Nature was not to be propitiated as a power of God but should be conquered in a planned scientific way. The dialectical use of human reason would reveal to man the splendours of freedom. Freedom, according to Marx, means the accentuation of rationality entailing the consequent transmutation of the necessity, writ large upon the face of nature, into freedom. Large-scale planning would create the conditions whereby increased production with less amount work would be possible.<sup>18</sup> Marx was a child of the scientific-technological civilization of the capitalistic West. He, therefore, did not prescribe the Platonic limitation of needs and wants as Gandhi did. He, on the other hand, propounded the use of mechanized power for catering to the needs not of a selfish group but of the entire proletarian collectivity. Although Gandhi modified his old denunciation of machinery as found in the *Hind-Swaraj*, he always accorded it a grudging recognition. But Marx and Lenin felt that socialism is impossible without mechanization. They held that without considerable increase in production it would be only a communism of scarcity. Marx argued that without mechanization, the working-hours of the labourer could not be reduced. In Marxism, the conception of freedom as rational knowledge and control of necessity is important. The prophetic appeals to control over human passions as the means to freedom, we do not find in him. He hoped that with the increasing perfection of the socialist society, human nature would undergo a transformation and there would be the consequent emergence of a new type of socialized man—the man rid of religious superstitions and egoistic characteristics who would be interested in a programme of fraternity and comradeship. To Marx, the gospel of dynamic social action by the proletariat is infallible.<sup>19</sup> The belief in the powers of man, society and science is stupendous. But notwithstanding the several references to man as the creator of history and the transformer of nature that we find in the writings of Marx, his belief is in a deterministic philosophy. He believed that by an inexorable powerful logic and momentum history is working towards a climacteric finale of the social drama, in favour of

<sup>18</sup> In the chapter entitled "The Trinitarian Formula" in the third volume of *Capital*, pp. 954-55, occurs a very important passage: "In fact the realm of freedom does not commence until the point is passed where labour under the compulsion of necessity and of external utility is required... The freedom in this field cannot consist of anything else but of the fact that socialized man, the associated producers, regulate their interchange with nature rationally, bring it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by some blind power; that they accomplish their task with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most adequate to their human nature and most worthy of it. But it always remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human power, which is its own end, the true realm of freedom, which however, can flourish only upon that realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working-day is its fundamental premise."

<sup>19</sup> *The Communist Manifesto*.

the proletariat. According to Marx, the mere colossality of human or social action does not succeed. The conformity of human action to the demands and ways of the historical logic of the situation created by the forces and relations of production is the criterion of success. This requires a dialectical knowledge of world history, philosophy, economics and the natural sciences. Hence Marx formulates broad laws of history which operate in the totality of the historical structure. At the present hour the historical laws are supposed to move with a deterministic finalistic certainty towards the victory of the labouring class and hence the latter have to organise, to battle and to win their destined freedom and emancipation. The philosophy of dialectical and historical materialism claims to have interpreted the world and its movements and the only thing needed is collective action and even armed revolution to effectuate large-scale social changes and transformations. Thus the basic concepts in the Marxist philosophy of history and politics are freedom, reason, science and revolution.

Mankind is passing through an age of unprecedented tensions and difficulties. The harnessing of atomic energy has placed horrible powers of annihilation in the hands of the political rulers. In an era of accentuated production of commodities and fashion-goods, new wants are being created and men are busy increasing their standard of living. In the eastern countries also there is the quest for planning, capital accumulation, heavy industries and the other adjuncts of a technological and scientific civilization. The increase of the economic functions of the state necessarily leads to the intensification of the power of the bureaucracy. In such an era of advancing militarism, big government, state planning and the strains and stresses of mounting inflation and soaring prices, the individuals in the Asian and African countries as well as in the West are fast losing their spontaneity, initiative and freedom. They are becoming increasingly dependent on the mechanical state which is leading slowly to the withering away of liberty. Gandhi was a champion of simplicity and limitation of wants. As a realist he felt that expansion of demands is bound to result in minimization of freedom because fresh demands mean increasing dependence on others. Hence I think that there is great wisdom in Gandhi's view that minimization of wants alone can prepare the conditions of individual freedom and rights. He also prescribed a valid technic for the assertion of individual right and freedom.

Marx is right in thinking that the advance of science and technology would create the conditions for removing the painful toil and drudgery from the lives of workers. But his entire thinking is in the direction of increasing the power of the state machine inspite of occassional references to the anarchist gospel of 'withering away of state'. The political shape of Marxism in action in Russia and China shows that whatsoever progress they might have made

in the expansion of heavy industries, in the creation of gigantic armed forces and in the advance of the standard of living of the citizens, there is no doubt that individual liberty has been crushed. Any attempt at the vindication of the call of "inner conscience" would be condemned in these countries as mystification and may even result in the liquidation of the person. Marx and Engels thought in terms of the group and not of the individual. They were enamoured of proletarian solidarity and they never appreciated the humanist demand of the Enlightenment for individual liberty and freedom. In their philosophy and programme there is emphasis on nationalization of the means of production. But they have absolutely failed to appreciate the significance of individual conscience. Gandhi not only recognized the importance of individual liberty but in the shape of Satyagraha he has placed before mankind a weapon of great possibilities for the vindication of freedom and rights.

The levels of freedom in Gandhi and Marx can be thus indicated :

<i>Gandhi</i>	<i>Marx</i>
(i) National Freedom (Swaraj) from foreign imperialism through Satyagraha.	(i) No attraction for national freedom won by the bourgeoisie.
(ii) Economic freedom through the pursuit of the Constructive Programme.	(ii) Freedom of the majority of the exploited through the end of capitalism by proletarian revolution.
(iii) Moral freedom through the practice of the vows of truth, non-violence etc.	(iii) Although a humanist in earlier writings, generally, the problems of individual purification and suppression of passions are ignored by Marx.
(iv) Spiritual freedom or God-realization.	(iv) Philosophical freedom as recognition of Necessity. (Hegelian notion borrowed by Marx).

## 8. Conclusion : Need of a Synthesis

Gandhi was a great national liberator, a champion of Asian consciousness, a saint and a moral revolutionary who preached the supremacy of Satyagraha or soul-force. He stressed the moral bankruptcy of modern civilization and prescribed the sanctity of ethical substance and universal moral will. Although Marxism was created by a German Jew trained at Berlin and Jena on the basis of the literature available to him by the British Museum, in some senses, Marx did represent a reaction against the Western

Civilization. (i) Although in his *Theses on Feuerbach* there are humanist elements, in his later works Marx provides an exaggerated dose of collectivist societarianism. (ii) By his theory that ethics is a "superstructure" whose notions represent rationalizations of class interests, Marx undermines the foundations of the sanctity of the moral norms, which, under the influence of Judaism and specially of Christianity, have been a persistent part of the western tradition. In his fury against the malady of capitalism, he became blind to the moral aspects of the Western Civilization.

Gandhi thought that a peaceful solution of our problems is not only possible but also the only way to have a real permanent solution. Marx wants a radical change in the social structure even by resort to force. Gandhi, although, in his inner core, a celestial prophet and an ethereal mystic, was also a shrewd leader with a tremendous sense of social and political realism. Marx was a dynamic fighter trying once more in history to revive the laws of Moses. In the name of the emancipation of the proletariat he thinks it wise to take a tooth for a tooth and a nail for a nail. Marx was a thinking realist, a colossal scholar of history, politics and economics, and a man of action. He will have a permanent place in the history of social, political and economic thought for his theory of scientific socialism built on the foundations of historical materialism and the economics of surplus value. Marx's system has been severely criticized by Duhring, Bohm-Bawerk, Masaryk, Von Mises etc., but others like Schumpeter and Cole have testified to the high stature of Marx as a thinker and economist. But he was not a saint. He never forgave the people who in any way sought to take advantage of him. His vitriolic pronouncements against Proudhon, Lassalle and Bakunin are integral portions of the history of the proletarian movement. Gandhi, the angelic saint forgave his opponents, and even the men who physically assaulted and even murdered him. Marx saw deep, Gandhi's visions were deeper. There is the possibility that Marx's dreams may be realized at least in some more countries. But on the eventual realization of the Gandhian ideas of truth and non-violence depends the future of human peace, freedom and culture. Both Gandhi and Marx have been the determined spokesmen of the aspirations of suppressed humanity and therein lies the secrets of their great success. Both have been outspoken champions of the interests and claims of the exploited sections of humanity. Gandhi, through his championhip of the legitimate aspirations of the Indian peasants and Marx through his fight for the recognition of the interests of the wage-earners in Western Europe were, in reality, fighting for the rights of humanity. Hence both Gandhism and Marxism have appeared as great gospels of social redemption. Gandhi through his *Sadhana*, *Tapasya* and sufferings and Marx by his consuming intellectual toil have indicated the pettiness of an egoistic and complacent existence. Both, in a sense, preach the

transcendence of petty egoism for a life of struggle waged in the interests of humanity. Regardless of the attacks levelled by Bohm-Bawerk, the school of German historical economics and Marx Weber, the name of Marx creates a hope in the minds and hearts of the exploited. Notwithstanding the opposition of orthodox Brahmanism, the British army and bureaucracy and local extremists and communalists, Gandhi wrought one of the most radical, social and political transformations in Indian history. Is it too idealistic to hope that we can find a way to synthesize the ethical absolutism of Gandhi with the emphasis of Marx on the immediate and radical solution of the economic problems in favour of the exploited classes ? If the social realism of Marx and the ethical idealism of Gandhi can be reconciled, the world will be happier.<sup>20</sup> But this will mean at least the partial renunciation of the Marxist belief in violence. Force might have been the midwife of every society pregnant with the birth of a new one but in a world faced with the portentous doom of nuclear annihilation, the cult of 'armed ideology' has to be substantially modified. One may not go to the extent of the Gandhian theory of loving your opponent, but the organised campaign of hatred, falsehood, suspicion and conspiracy have to end.

20 For further suggestions and comparative analysis, see V. P. Varma, "Buddha and Marx", *The Patna College Magazine*, April, 1946.

# 18

## GANDHI AND T.H. GREEN

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There are some similarities but many important differences between the Gandhian theory of Satyagraha and T.H. Green's concept of resistance. Both Gandhi and Green (1836-1882) are spiritual idealists and are opposed to materialism and agnosticism. Gandhi accepts Truth as God. Green also accepts the reality of an infinite consciousness.<sup>1</sup> Both Gandhi and Green are champions of moral will and adhere to the ideal of moral purification. Both are advocates of the supremacy of the right to life and both are influenced by Christianity. Both would adhere to the Kantian distinction between the external constraining power of law and the spontaneity of morality. According to Green, there always is some person who is to be blamed and condemned for producing the factors which lead to war. He propounds the sanctity of life and holds that there is no line beyond which the massacre, torture and suffering of the human kind can cease to be inexcusable. Gandhi also emphatically condemns the violence of war. Both accept the necessity of maintaining the stability of the social structures<sup>2</sup> and both believe in the right and duty of resistance to authority in certain situations.

- 1 It is doubtful if Green accepts the concept of an absolute person.
- 2 M.K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 174 (*Young India*, January 5, 1922) : "At the same time that the right of civil disobedience is insisted upon, its use must be guarded by all conceivable restrictions. Every possible provision should be made against an outbreak of violence or general lawlessness. Its area as well as its scope should also be limited to the barest necessity of the case..." He also wrote : "A Satyagrahi is nothing if not instinctively law-abiding, and it is his law-abiding nature which exacts from him implicit obedience to the highest law that is the voice of conscience which overrides all other laws."

Thoreau in his *Civil Disobedience*, p. 90, quotes the following lines from Paley's chapter on "Duty of Submission to Civil Government," "...that so long as the interest of the whole society required it, that is, so long as the established government cannot be resisted or changed without public inconveniency, it is the will of God that the established government be obeyed, and no longer... This principle being admitted, the justice of every particular case of resistance is reduced to a computation of the quality of the danger and grievance on the one side, and of the probability and expense of redressing it on the other." This passage although from an earlier writer, could have well represented the views of T. H. Green.

Both Green and Gandhi accept the notion of disinterestedness as a basis of freedom. Green pleads for the reconciliation of will and reason. He also wants the cultivation of disinterestedness and for the devotion to common good. Green's theory of disinterestedness bears the influence of the Kantian conception of "universalization". Gandhi wants the synthesis of faith and knowledge for the practice of *Karmayoga*. He stresses disinterestedness or *Anasakti* because he wants dedication of all fruits of action to God. But it has to be noted that in the western idealistic philosophy will is regarded as being only practical reason. On the other hand, there is a far greater disparity between *Ichha* (desire) and *Buddhi* (intellect) in the thought of the *Bhagavadgita* which is the basis of Gandhian ethics.

In Green, there is a greater emphasis on the determination of a man's conduct by social laws and norms. In Gandhi, there is a greater stress on the determination of a man's conduct by the dictates of the inner voice (*Antaratman*). Green advocates the emergence of rights from social relations. Like Hegel and Like Bradley, later on, he wants to provide a concrete content of social duties to the formal structure of the Kantian moral will. But Gandhi formulates the more individualistic theory of *Karmayoga* or action based on detachment as a path to God-realisation. Thus while the ethical teachings of Green have a social orientation, Gandhi's eyes are always, ultimately, fixed on the realisation of eternal blessedness or *Moksha*.

Furthermore, there is no conception of the renunciation of fruits of all actions (*Sarvakarmaphalatyaga*) in Green. The whole debate between *Karman* and *Sannyasa* is alien to the tradition of European idealism.

The Gandhian concept of *Satyagraha* is at once more ethical and more individualistic than Green's concept of resistance. There is no idea of a living burning faith in the compassion and justice of God as a requirement for the resister, in Green's political theory, as there is, in Gandhi. Green is an advocate of common good but is not concerned with the problems of positive love towards the despotic people whose authority is being resisted. His basic theme is the avoidance of social anarchy and the preservation of the sentiment of law-abidingness. While Green's vision is dominated by the social and political conception of common good, Gandhi believed in universal compassion for all living beings and not merely for men. Gandhi is far more concerned with the moral dialectics of non-hatred for the aggressor.

Green belonged to the school of Hegelian idealism and was influenced by the Aristotelian concept of the moral personality of the community. Gandhi's temper, as stated earlier, was far more individualistic. He was ever ready to immolate himself for the

sake of loyalty to God and truth.<sup>3</sup> This fundamental spirit of martyrdom is almost foreign to the whole theoretical structure of Green. Gandhi was more radical and trenchant in his opposition to the state than any British idealist liberal nurtured in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Hegel ever could be. Essentially Gandhi was a Satyagrahi prophet who had declared his unequivocal resistance to all concentrations of power, force and violence. The influence of the individualistic spirit of the old Sannyasin and the Bhikkhu tradition of India joined with the protestant individualism of Thoreau, and the radical anti-statism of Tolstoy was too pronounced on Gandhi. Gandhi was an arch-champion of the moral conscience. Hence in spite of some similarities between Gandhi and Green regarding the existence of a primal spiritual infinite, the perfectibility of human character and the justifiability of resistance to political despotism in some cases, the profound difference between the spirit of the Oxford professor and the mighty moral revolutionary leader of Non-cooperation Movement (1920-1922), the Salt Satyagraha (1930-1931) and the famous Quit India Movement (1942-44) must be borne in mind. Notwithstanding his limited support to not only the right but the duty of justified resistance to despotism, Green remained a reformist and a supporter of capitalism and unequal distribution of property as the necessary concomitant to the different requirements of individuals for the objectification of their personality. Gandhi, on the other hand, had the spirit of the persistent rebel and the lone sojourner on what he considered the path to Truth. Towards the end of his life he made fundamental advances in the direction of social and economic radicalism and thus went beyond Green's idealistic liberalism.

M.K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha, op. cit.*, p. 380 : "To lay down one's life, even alone, for what one considers to be right, is the very core of Satyagraha. More no man can do." He believed in the valiant glory in fighting alone and stated that the best and the most solid work was done in the wilderness of minority. He refers to Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad standing alone and even remarked that "strength of numbers is the delight of the timid."

# 19

## GANDHI AND LENIN

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Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) and Nicolai Lenin (1870-1924) were the two foremost contemporaries of the twentieth century. Both of them were influenced by western thought. If Gandhi looked to the Testament, Tolstoy and Ruskin for inspiration, Lenin was fanatically attached to the writings of Hegel (only for the dialectic), Marx and Engels. Both became conscious of the catastrophic predicaments of the contemporary world through personal sufferings. If the barrister Gandhi became a rebel having forced out of a first class railway compartment at Pietermaritzburg because of the dark colour of his skin, the execution of his own elder brother Alexander Ulianov by the cruel Czardom, made Lenin a permanent enemy of the Russian autocracy. Both embodied a passionate quest for justice for the exploited and the under-dog. Both had a sense of mission. If Gandhi, the metaphysical idealist, was urgent in quest of *Moksha* for which social and humanitarian service was the only genuine means, Lenin, as a dialectical materialist, interpreted the inexorable laws of history as working for the sure triumph of the proletariat. Both had immense faith in the eventual success of their ideals in the entire world. Both were men of iron will. Destiny favoured both in that they witnessed the realization of their political programmes, although not of their economic and social ideologies.

But along with some common points in their ideologies and achievements, they were poles apart in their metaphysical and economic notions and programmes. Gandhi was a spiritual idealist and also an ethical absolutist and hence taught the doctrine of the perfect congruence of means and ends. He believed that only good means could realize any worth while end. For Lenin, the end was immanent in the historical structure—it was the eventual realization of communist society through the immediate consummation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. For the realization of these political and economic goals, force and violence could certainly be used. The expropriators and the enemies of the revolution had to be liquidated. Hence Lenin was concerned only with the success of his dominant aims and the slogan of the purification of motives and intentions was, for him, only a process of mystification. Hence while Gandhi, the

saint, believed in prolonged attempts to convert even his inveterate and formidable opponents like Smuts, Churchill, Jinnah and others, Lenin the militant atheist poured forth the choicest vitriolics against his adversaries like Peter Struve, Karl Kautsky, Martynov, Bogdanov etc. Gandhi's remarks against his political opponents were clothed in modest and courteous language but Lenin's even theoretical writings, are also at times soiled with vulgar invectives against his adversaries.

For Gandhi, religion was the essence of life and even politics had to be transformed by the religious spirit of love and service. But certainly, he was opposed to the iniquities of organised religions. To Lenin, religion was born out of the fear of the blind forces of capital and it was an agency for suppressing the rising revolutionary forces.

Gandhi was concerned with common good and social justice but his spirit was of the individualist. For him, the individual was a sacred entity, as he was, in essence, the spirit, Lenin, on the other hand, was in the Greek tradition of ascribing primacy to the collectivity and, for him, proletarian class interest was the uppermost concern.

The peasant and the agricultural labourer was the centre of Gandhi's economic ideas because India consisted of the seven lacs of villages. The cities and towns represented only an external and immoral surface. Hence Gandhi was the champion of an agrarian civilization with the emphasis on Khadi and village industries. Marx had been a champion of the wage-earning industrial proletariat. But the Russian group of Narodnik socialists thought in terms of the peasants. Lenin, as a Marxist, was certainly concerned with the interests of the industrial workers, but could not, as a Russian, be unmindful of the large number of Russian peasants and agricultural labourers who overwhelmingly outnumbered the industrial proletariat in that country. Hence he always spoke of the interests of the combined workers and peasants.

Both Gandhi and Lenin were opposed to imperialism but for different reasons. Gandhi was opposed to imperialism because it symbolized exploitation of the weaker races and the political subordination of the colonial world. For Lenin, imperialism was the highest stage of capitalism in its form of finance capitalism. Imperialism resulted in the export of capital for investment in the colonial world and it divided the groups of capitalist powers into two hostile armed camps.

Some of the other differences in the economic philosophies and plans of Gandhi and Lenin can be thus represented :

*Gandhism*

- (i) Fair increase of production.
- (ii)
  - (a) Fair or living wage in the first stage
  - (b) Payment according to needs in the second stage, and
  - (c) Equal distribution in *Ramrajya*.
- (iii) Political and economic decentralization and village republics.

*Leninism*

- (i) Maximization of production.
- (ii)
  - (a) Work—in the first stage, and
  - (b) Needs—in the second stage.
- (iii) Management of industry by a vast administrative set-up.

In the light of the above-mentioned fundamental differences in their metaphysical, economic and political ideas, it is absolutely wrong to say that Gandhism is communism minus violence.

Part FOUR

**THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SARVODAYA**

# 20

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SARVODAYA

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### 1. Introduction

Sarvodaya, today, does not represent a mere vision or utopian notion. It has assumed the dimensions of a movement and a socio-economic force of great potentialities. The concrete shape of this movement is crystallizing very fast, and students of political and social philosophy are becoming interested in it. It has even been regarded in some circles as a dynamic philosophy which can make possible the advent of a radically transformed humanity. Hence it is important to study its philosophical and psychological foundations as also its political and social implications.

There are numerous social, economic and cultural problems facing modern India. There is the problem of land reform and village reorganisation; there is an agitation for fixing ceilings on land and for ending the system of share-cropping, and there is the movement for strengthening agrarian democracy as operating through the Panchayat. There is the great challenge of concretely realizing liberty, equality and justice for over five hundred millions. There are other economic and cultural challenges too. In a large perspective it can be said that the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution and the universal Declaration of Human Rights have to be implemented. There is the important problem of adjusting the concept of the sovereignty of a newly arisen nation-state with the global perspective of internationalism. Sarvodaya seeks to build a new society on the foundations of the old spiritual and moral values of India and attempts to meet the challenge of the contemporary problems.

The challenges which the western world had to face in the course of five centuries have had to be faced by India in the course of a century and a half. In the fifteenth century there was the Renaissance, in the sixteenth appeared the Reformation, in the eighteenth came the challenge of the Industrial and the French Revolutions. The formidable challenge of Marxian socialism appeared in the nineteenth century. The devastating challenges of Freud-

ianism and totalitarianism and the outburst of the fourth estate (the proletariat) are the phenomena of the twentieth century. These movements, together, have absolutely convulsed Europe and America and have almost transformed the total shape of the medieval West. In India also, the replicas of almost all of these movements are being generated and fostered because of the contact with the West. In this country the problems of harmony and adjustment between modern western concepts and old Eastern Dharma have been extremely complicated because the impact of all these colossal movements have been and are experienced in such a short time.<sup>17</sup> Hence, to some extent, India is undergoing a phase of formless transition and crisis. We have won political independence but have not yet fully discovered and fulfilled our national soul and self. The attempt at the discovery of our national soul and self began with the spiritual endeavours of great teachers like Virajananda, Rammohan, Ramakrishna, Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda, Tilak, Gandhi and Aurobindo. The Sarvodaya movement as conceived by Gandhi and as extended and developed by his followers is an attempt at the discovery and enshrinement of the soul of India and its fulfilment at the social and economic levels.

Whenever and wherever the movement of capitalistic industrialism expands there is engineered a counter-movement of protest. This protest movement sometimes seeks to buttress once more the values and ethos of an agrarian civilization. The greatest exponent of this kind of patriarchal agrarian *weltanschauung*, in the nineteenth century, has been the Russian religious anarchist prophet, Leo Tolstoy. In India also, as soon as the western capitalistic industrialism and colonial imperialism began to make devastating onslaughts on the old culture, there arose movements which asserted the primacy of our moral values and social traditions. Dayananda, Tagore and Gandhi were the pronounced antagonists of the commercial type of civilization based on the concept of accumulation. Sarvodaya envisages the re-building of the political and social structure on the basis of the reconstructed agrarian traditions and patterns of behaviour of India.

This philosophy of sarvodaya is integral and synthetic in character. The synthetic approach is of great merit in political philosophy. Plato built his philosophy by the synthesis of the ideas of Parmenides, Socrates and Pythagoras. Aristotle wanted to synthesize the ideas of Plato and Democritus. Aquinas synthesized the ideas of the Bible and Aristotle. Marx synthesized the dialectic of Hegel, the materialism of the French philosophers and Feuerbach and the economics of Ricardo. The philosophy of sarvodaya is based on the mystical intuitions and the social and political experiences of

1 V. P. Verma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, (Bombay and New York, Asia Publishing House, 1960), pp. 210-11.

Gandhi. In his long life Gandhi attempted the synthesis of the ideas of Vedanta, Buddhism, Tulsidas, Christianity, Ruskin,<sup>2</sup> Tolstoy, Thoreau etc. The synthesis that Gandhi wanted to bring about was mainly at intuitional and experiential levels.<sup>3</sup> Gandhism is primarily a synthesis of intuitions and experiences. But a pronouncedly intellectual character is being given to the sarvodaya philosophy by its protagonists and advocates. Sarvodaya takes up the Gandhian synthesis and tries to work out the implications of these ideas at more critical and analytical levels. It has tried to incorporate some ideas from the western socialist philosophy as well. If Gandhism was mainly a synthesis of moral intuitions and experiences, the sarvodaya philosophy tries to build a synthesis also of theoretical abstractions and political and economic generalizations.

## 2. Philosophical Foundations of Sarvodaya

The fundamental notion in the sarvodaya philosophy is the primacy and ultimateness of the Spirit. Gandhi's dominant concern was with the realization of God as all-pervasive Truth. His political, economic and social endeavours and programmes were oriented towards progressive enlargement of the moral consciousness through the service of the Daridra Narayana and the consequent, intimate and intuitive realization of the primordial divine spirit.<sup>5</sup> If a man exceeds the limitations of the ego through the sustained practice of the *Vratas*, he approximates to the realization of God as the supreme truth. The belief in the all-governing majesty of the Spirit imparts to man the compassionate ethical incentive to share in the pain and anguish of all creatures because all are the manifestations of the same supreme truth. Gandhi had sincere, unquestioning and deep faith in the divine being. He wanted to realize God through selfless, dedicated, social and political service. The firm belief in the overwhelming supremacy of the divine spirit provided a meaningful integration and poise to his life which was full of diverse and multifarious activities. This spiritual orientation and devout faith of Gandhi has left its impact on the other leaders and workers in this movement of Sarvodaya.<sup>4</sup>

2 Gandhi had published an abridged Gujarati rendering of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* which he called "Universal Dawn". See Chap. XIV, *Supra*.

3 *Supra*, Chapter XIV.

4 Cf. Jayaprakash Narayan, *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, (Tanjore, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, 1955), p. 6 : "This movement (Bhoodan) is based on the principle of change of heart. It is being conducted in the belief that man is amenable to change. That is so, because all of us are essentially one, fragments of the same Almighty Father." Narayan, *Ibid.*, p. 20, accepts that the Gandhian stress on conversion is rooted in a spiritual view of things and of human origin and destiny. In his famous article entitled "Incentives for Goodness", *Socialism to Sarvodaya*, (Madras, Socialist Book Centre, 1956), pp. 30-31, Narayan says : "I feel convinced, therefore, that man must go beyond the material to find the incentive to goodness. As a corollary, I feel further that the task of social reconstruction cannot succeed under the inspiration of a materialist philosophy."

It is impossible to be dogmatic or categorical in the answers to ultimate metaphysical problems. They concern matters of inward realization and subjective experience. There is no direct or objective proof for the reality of Ishvara or Brahman or a spiritual ultimate Being. It is true that the firm acceptance of the reality of a spiritual Existent does provide great consolation to man by explaining many things and elements which appear contradictory and irrational otherwise. It makes even death meaningful because physical death is regarded as the pathway to immortality. But such faith has to be inwardly won. Certainly it has great social and political relevance. It may be possible to justify power politics and oligarchical plutocracy and tyranny if one believes that matter in motion is the sole reality. But if there is a spiritual governance in the world and if there is a pervasive law of the moral vindication of truth and justice, then man, if he sincerely believes in that truth, will be afraid of taking a wrong step against himself or against the society. ]

But whenever I begin to think about the belief in God and the relevant ethical action consonant with that belief, I am perturbed by two doubts. God is relevant to personal belief and experience. But there are groups and individuals who never had any experience of God. Perhaps most of the people who talk about God and claim to believe in him do so as a matter of verbal profession. On the other hand, moral laws are for the betterment of the individual and social conduct of all people. Morality has a collective orientation. All people have to be moral. Hence sometimes I feel that it may not be worth while to base a system of laws of the widest possible social relevance, which moral laws certainly are, on the foundation of a metaphysical proposition which is controversial and capable only of personal verification which, after all, is a highly subjective and immensely fluctuating criterion. A second point also disturbs me. I wonder as to how could Gautama Buddha, universally recognized as one of the greatest seers and moral prophets of humanity, attain such tremendous elevation of character without any obvious theistic belief? I do not want to enter here into the details of early Buddhist metaphysics.<sup>5</sup> But I think that most students and scholars of Buddhism will agree on this point that Buddha did not pray to any God nor did he base his noble eightfold path on the foundation of any positive belief in a supernatural entity or a spiritual substance or a metaphysical person. Hence I begin to doubt the truth of the statement that for being good or for being a true servant of society or for suffering for the sake of justice it is essential to believe in a spiritual view of the universe. On the other hand, I am also repelled by the blasphemous doctrine of ethical relativism. I believe that for the elevation of humanity it is essential to accept some ethical canons as

<sup>5</sup> For details, see V.P. Varma, "The Upanishads and the Origins of Buddhism," *The Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, (Buddha Jayanti Special Issue, 1956, Vol. II), pp. 372-94.

being of universal and absolutely binding character. Without the acceptance of some moral absolutes, there will be an unprincipled struggle of rival groups and individuals for personal self-seeking and mutual glorification without there being any common ground for appeal and arbitration. Hence for the good of humanity, it is essential to have agreed consensus on some supremely valid moral laws which should and will bind all groups and all countries. It may be possible to have these fundamental principles of ethical idealism without any corresponding adherence to the belief in some divine reality.

Indian culture has always stressed the significance of moral and spiritual values. The foremost builders of our culture—Rama and Krishna, Valmiki and Vyasa, Buddha and Samkara<sup>6</sup> have stood for the primacy of moral values. Even in modern times the teachers and prophets of our land like Dayananda and Vivekananda have stood for the sanctity of ethics and spirituality. The religious leaders of India have not only taught the great truths but tried to embody them in their own lives and hence they have a great appeal for the people. Buddha and Gandhi will go down for ages as the great concretizations of moral values. The movement of sarvodaya is an attempt at the reinforcement of these abiding and significant values. One of the most distressing phenomena of modern times is the worship of worldly success. Success has come to be measured in terms of achievement, bank balance and efficiency. It is computed in numbers and expressed through mathematical figures, long charts, diagrams, histograms, polygons and cubes of statistics. But in the craze for success, power and strength, there is a silent repudiation of the perennial significance of the human spirit.<sup>7</sup> But Gandhi would have refused to barter the human soul for external success. The latter is temporary and ephemeral. It may have only superficial glamour. But the continuing vitality of civilizations and cultures is built by the human spirit which is oriented to the realization of a noble and decent existence for all. Our political, social and economic life has been seized with a malady. The malady of our times—perhaps of all times, is the mad quest for power. Sovereignty is preferred to co-operative activity and suffering. Service is being given up in quest of personal aggrandisement. Humanity is, thus, undergoing almost a phase of moral collapse and ethical nihilism. In an era of the mad rush for power, the significance of sarvodaya lies in stressing the permanent value of self-abnegation.<sup>7</sup> It wants to replace party strifes,

6 Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodan Ganga*, Vol. II, pp. 151-56, claims to be a preacher of the Vedantic metaphysics as interpreted by Samkara. He claims that spiritual gnosis and compassion for human beings are the two cardinal concepts of Hinduism. This quest for the Vedantic foundation of Sarvodaya is in line with the devotion that Gandhi had for the Ishopanishad and the Bhagavadgita.

7 Jayaprakash Narayan, *Socialism to Sarvodaya*, (Madras, 1956, Socialist Book Club), p. 23, refers to two types of values : (a) certain values which are condi-  
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jealousies and competition by the sacred law of co-operative mutuality and dominant altruism. Party struggles have corrupted and perverted political life. In its stress on the replacement of majority voting by unanimity in the village panchayats, sarvodaya is giving expression to a moral principle of cardinal importance because it wants to enshrine the primacy of goodness and character in place of the skill of manipulation and self-assertion. Sarvodaya appeals to the mind and heart in terms of values and goals. The decadence and corruption which infect organised institutional mechanisms can be removed only by the reassertion of moral and spiritual values and their ever-growing incorporation in social, political and economic life. That is perhaps the only way to the salvation of India and the world.

The autonomy of moral value has been challenged by three critical thought-currents. First, ethical relativism, which, on the basis of the diversity of ethical judgments and conceptions prevailing in different social groups, tribes and civilizations pleads for the relativity of all social values and norms. Secondly, Marxism, which upholds that the dominant ethical ideas are the ideas of the dominant ruling classes. The Marxian approach to ethics is a near version of what Thrasymachus said in ancient Greece—justice is the interest of the stronger. By interpreting moral conceptions in terms of the antagonism between rival classes, Marxism also has debunked the authenticity of moral values.<sup>8</sup> The third challenging creed today is the concept of ethical neutrality. In the name of scientific objectivity and scholarly precision, it is stated that the research worker in the field of social sciences should not prescribe values : he should only analyze values. Against the nihilistic tendencies implicit in these three creeds, sarvodaya pleads emphatically for the sanctity and supreme significance of moral values. Like Buddhism and Kantism, sarvodaya stands for the supremacy and absoluteness of moral values. The moral collapse and prostration of our world needs the revitalizing notion of ethical idealism. I agree with the stress on the moral approach to social and economic problems which sarvodaya envisages.

### **3. Socialism, Communism and Sarvodaya**

Although the situational background from which socialism and sarvodaya have emerged is different, still their humanist idealism is almost similar.<sup>9</sup> Socialism arose in the West as a philosophy of the

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tioned and determined by environments, and (b) "certain basic values which are absolute and eternal." The dominant values enunciated by Patanjali in the form of *Yama* and *Niyama*, which had been reinforced by Gandhi in his dedicated life are being restressed in the form of the replacement of Rajaniti by Lokaniti because politics, left to itself, has a tendency to become ethically neutral, if not positively immoral.

<sup>8</sup> *Supra*, Chapter XVII.

<sup>9</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan, *Socialism to Sarvodaya*, (Madras, Socialist Book Centre, 1956), p. 96 : "Sarvodaya represents the highest socialist values."

industrial proletariat. It stood for its rights and gave coherence to its aspirations. Hence it challenged the pretensions of the contemporary state which bolstered the interests of the capitalists. But although socialism spoke for the exploited labouring population of the nineteenth century, in its fundamental aim, it goes back to the days of Plato and the Biblical prophets who pleaded for the neutralization of the ego and the assertion of the good of the community. Thus the basic aspiration of socialism is moral and spiritual in its nature. It is true that in modern times the trade unions and the labour parties have spread the socialist ideology and it is also true that in some of the radical forms of communism the violent cult of class struggles and the expropriation of the expropriators has been endlessly repeated, but, nevertheless, the moral appeal of socialism is derived from its outspoken championship of the good of those who have been exploited and are suppressed and backward. In spite of its associations with the materialist dialectical methodology and the technological-economic interpretation of history, the dynamic fervour and agitational momentum of socialism are derived from its moral orientation in its being the intellectual crystallization of the interests and aspirations of the down-trodden millions. No body can deny the deep moral appeal to the human heart which the lives of sufferings, persecutions and abnegations led by Marx or Lenin, Luxemburg or Bakunin have. They suffered because they hoped to rescue the millions thereby.

Sarvodaya stands for the emancipation, the uplift and the elevation of all. It traces its theoretical roots in the Vedic and Vedantic teaching that from a higher standpoint all living beings are participants in or portions (*amsa*) of a super-material reality. Hence the good of all living beings which necessarily implies the good of all humanity has to be positively fostered. It repudiates, therefore, the limited gospel of the greatest good of the greatest number. It aims to serve the good of all and not merely of the numerical majority. It is, certainly, not opposed to the concept of social and economic equality. Since all beings are reflections or manifestations of a supreme spiritual ultimate,<sup>10</sup> hence, all have to be provided the opportunity for their greatest development and perfection. In socialism, the stress is on material and vital perfection attained through the devising of a socio-economic structure which eliminates wasteful competition and private appropriation. In the theory of sarvodaya also, there is no negation of political and economic satisfactions and requirements. It will not be correct to characterize sarvodaya as negativistic in its approach. It does not negate the importance of material commodities. It would refuse, however, to regard them as

<sup>10</sup> In the Advaita Vedanta, sometimes the individual ego is regarded as the limitation (उपाधिपरिच्छन्न or अवलेश्वावधेदक) or the reflection (प्रतिविम्ब) of the supreme spiritual real. According to the Vishistadvaita, the individual is a part or real mode of the *brahman*.

the dominant goal of all human endeavours.<sup>11</sup> Like Aristotle, sarvodaya would like to use the external goods for the satisfaction of the human spirit. It would regard them as means and not as ends in themselves. But there is in sarvodaya, an all-dominating moral and spiritual approach. Economic amenities have to be oriented to serve the needs of the human spirit and it is wrong to cramp the free movement of the spirit by suffocating it with the all-governing dominance of the sinews of production.<sup>12</sup> Sarvodaya, however, is not merely a theory of ethical justice. It is emphatic in its quest also for distributive social and economic justice. In its acceptance of the concept that all forms of wealth belong to society, sarvodaya has shown its radical and even revolutionary character. Towards the end of his life, Gandhi also came to advocate a more radical economic implication of trusteeship and went beyond being a theorist of spiritual socialism.<sup>13</sup> Sarvodaya, indeed, has been, more deeply influenced by the socialistic and communistic ideas of the West than Gandhi who derived some of his economic ideas from Ruskin and Tolstoy. Both socialism and sarvodaya are, thus, radical anti-individualistic doctrines and that accounts for their moral appeal. In capitalism the primary quest is for production. But both socialism and sarvodaya emphasize that the system of production cannot be divorced from the ethics of distribution on an equitable plane. It is certainly true that we do not have to distribute poverty and hence the acceleration of production is vitally essential. But the problem of production has to be linked up with the immediate problems of the equitable and just distribution of the resources of society.<sup>14</sup> Both socialism and sarvodaya refuse to be satisfied with the creed of the accentuation of production. The concrete problems of social justice and the collective ownership of the goods of society cannot be shelved. Thus socialism and sarvodaya are kindred philosophies in two respects. First, both derive their profound moral appeal from their rootedness in the fundamental belief in the good of the whole community in place of the narrow pursuit of the interests of the oligarchical minority of plutocrats. Secondly, both stress that there should be a social appropriation and equitable distribution of the goods of society.

But in spite of some fundamental similarities between socialism and sarvodaya, there is great difference between them on the question of means and methods. From the standpoint of sarvodaya, there are

11 Cf. Jayaprakash Narayan, *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, (Kashi, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1958), pp. 25-26. Narayan pleads for a "balanced or whole view of life" and is opposed to "an outlook on life that feels an insatiable hunger for material goods." He warns us that due to the triumph of competition there would be the danger that equality, liberty and fraternity may be "submerged in a universal flood of materialism."

12 Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodan Ganga*, Vol. I, pp. 251-57.

13 Vinoba Bhave, *Sarvodaya ke Adhara*, (in Hindi, Kashi, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangha, 1956), pp. 62-63.

two shortcomings in the socialist philosophy. First, the basic technic for effectuating socialism is supposed to be nationalisation.<sup>14</sup> But nationalisation may entrench the control of the bureaucrats and may be another name for state capitalism. According to sarvodaya, the socialist belief in positive state action as the sovereign remedy for human ills is unfounded. Sarvodaya feels that if the final aim is the elimination of the state, then concrete immediate steps have to be taken here and now towards the minimization of state functions and state control. It is unrealistic to dream of the dawn of a stateless society through the aggrandizement of state power in politics and economics. Sarvodaya, hence, pleads for villagization.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes it has been argued that in place of the socialist and communist theory of collectivization of land which, in practice, has wrought great havoc on the peasant population, villagization or the ownership of land by the villages would be a more effective remedy. The individual tenants and agricultural labourers can understand and appreciate the ownership of land by the concrete village community but ownership by the state or the nation seems to be a remote and abstract concept which does not have adequate power of attracting the people. In an agrarian society, collectivization would have to be enforced by the coercive technics of totalitarianism because the farmers will not willingly part with the ownership of land. Hence sarvodaya pleads for the ownership of land by the village community. Thus, while socialism believes in nationalisation, sarvodaya accepts village ownership. Secondly, socialism adheres, at least in some cases, to the concept of violent revolution. But sarvodaya has no place for violence in its philosophy and technic.

The differences between sarvodaya and communism are far more basic and fundamental. Communism in Russia, is a totalitarian system wedded to the cult of regimentation, violence and party dictatorship. Its all-pervasive aim has been the transformation of a backward feudal agrarian economy into a modern industrial-collectivist economy, and this immense transformation has been sought to be achieved by the revival, in more intensified forms, of the old Czarist technics of intimidation, coercion, persecution and even wholesale liquidation of the dissentient elements. No less ruthless and destructive are the technics of Maoist China which seems to be bent on reviving the savagery of Mongol imperialism on the foundation of modern dictatorial barbarism. Sarvodaya, to the contrary, believes in persuasion and changes of heart. Gandhi has taught the ethics of self-suffering to convert the opponent because violence can never be the foundation of a just and equal society.<sup>16</sup> Violence breeds counter-violence.<sup>17</sup> It is a species of unfounded romantic utopianism to

14 The methods of municipal socialism and co-operatives have only a subordinate place in the socialist philosophy.

15 For the relation between state and non-violence, see Vinoba Bhave, *Sivarajya-Shastra*, (in Hindi, New Delhi, Sasta Sahitya Mandal, 1953), pp. 58-68.

accept that once the capitalist exploiters are liquidated, the reign of liberty, equality, justice and abundance would be almost automatically introduced. Violence, in the process of its action, has the immanent tendency of generating other sources of maladjustment, contradiction, injustice and further violence. It is futile to believe that a party can obtain power through violence and then one fine morning it would undergo a process of spiritual transubstantiation and fraternity would replace violence. The experience of historical movements shows that individuals and parties become wedded to the means and methods through which they obtain ascendancy. Hence if the aim is to realize a society based on justice, freedom and equality, the means have to be equally pure and noble. Only non-violence can be the foundation of a society free from exploitation and injustice. In face of the annihilationistic capacity of modern weapons of destruction, it is blasphemy to sing the Heraclitean song of 'war is the father of all good things'. A society of liberty and equality cannot be built by the capture of state power by a monolithic totalitarian party. Sarvodaya, hence, is intensely and trenchantly critical of the methods and technics of Russian communism. Jayaprakash Narayan has been mercilessly exposing the totalitarian and despotic trends of Russian politics. The exposures of the cruel and vengeful deeds of Stalin by Nikita Khruschev should be an eye-opener to all. It makes imperative a re-examination of the alternatives to violence and communism.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4. The Village Community

There is found partly a Rousseauic element in sarvodaya's philosophy of civilization.<sup>17</sup> The phenomenal growth of technology and industrialization is everywhere leading to the extension of megalopolitan centres—the big cities which contain vast numbers of human beings living in close physical and material proximity but without the development of the organic bonds of fraternity, co-operation and mutuality. Modern western civilization is the result of the growth of legal and contractual relationships which are impersonal in character and are different from familialistic bonds. The gigantic framework of modern civilization is based on the concept of increasing formal rationalization and mechanization in the social and economic spheres. Its root idea is the accentuation of the production of those commodi-

16 According to Vinoba Bhave, *Swarajya-Shashtra*, pp. 26-27, there are four elements in capitalism : (i) Centralization, (ii) Mechanization, (iii) Armaments, and (iv) Exploitation. He feels that communism eliminates only the fourth element and retains the other three.

17 Jayaprakash Narayan, *Towards a New Society*, (New Delhi, Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1958), p. 155, says that the Lincolnian concept of democracy can be realized only in small communities but "large communities with representative system and party system would not square up with this definition of democracy."

ties which cater to the comforts of man. But the deep bonds of love and affection, community-solidarity and mutual give and take which characterize small groups cannot be reproduced in vast urban concentrations.] The growth of urban centres with their enormous size also leads to the loss of those bonds and restraints of the small co-operating group which have, so far, been responsible for keeping the anarchic and rebellious tendencies of the individual under control. The absence of the social and moral control exercised by the small village community on the neighbourhood results in the growth of a sense of helplessness, normlessness (*anomie*) and despair whenever the assertive individualism of the modern man living in big cities fails to be reconciled to the environment or whenever its walls of economic expectations begin to crumble at the spectre of sickness, unemployment and insecurity. [Hence, seen in the perspective of the evils of urbanization, there is great value in the small communities from both the social-psychological and ethical standpoints. From the psychological standpoint they reinforce the bonds of mutuality and organic altruism and consensus because there is present a greater degree of the sense of 'belongingness' in the villages. From the ethical standpoint, they are centres which impose a system of social norms which integrate the individual with the community and thus put a healthy restraint upon the encroaching ravages of individualism for the growth of which there is greater scope in the towns and cities. These are solid psychological and ethical gains whose value cannot be negated or minimized. Nor is even the Rousseauic argument in favour of small communities absolutely anachronistic and meaningless. Rousseau had fancied that the proportion of personal share in the exercise of governmental authority is greater in a small community than in a big community. Let us take the case of two communities, one consisting of a hundred and the other of a thousand members. In the first case, the share of each member in governmental power is one-hundredth of the total power, while in the second case the share of the individual is only one-thousandth of the total. We may not agree with the mathematics of Rousseau but his insight has great truth in it. [Genuine exercise of power by the vast numbers of human beings is possible only in small-size republics. Hence there is meaning in the stress on the organisation of village commonwealths by Gandhi and the leaders of sarvodaya.]

The modern man, in India and elsewhere, is being fragmentalized. He is becoming unmindful of the dominant values and symbols round which he can organise and focalize his psychic energies. There is a trend towards the dispersion and disruption of personality and the neutralization of the sense of community-cohesiveness. [Since the old Rigvedic times, Indian teachers have inculcated the annihilation of egoistic selfishness. They stress the concept of *Vayam*—we, and not the concept of *Aham*—I, or the ego. The *Rigveda* and the *Yajurveda* want the realization of prosperity for

all.<sup>18</sup> Devotion to the community is essential to evoke powerful individual responses of initiative and vigour for dedicated work of social service. Continuous individual initiative and efforts can alone maintain the organic structure of the community. Hence, in the Buddhist philosophy, we find insistence upon *Apramada* and *Virya*. Dynamic efforts are essential to stabilize the foundations of a shattered economic and social organisation. India lives in villages and the movement of sarvodaya is an attempt to integrate the agrarian social and economic life in terms of the eternal and abiding value of the neutralization of the ego and the dedication to the good of all which has been perennially emphasized in Indian culture.<sup>19</sup> The need of the hour is vast initiative and constructive efforts oriented to the goal of rebuilding the village society and economy. Sarvodaya wants to release the energies of the sleeping village population. The impact of British imperialism had been immensely damaging upon the village life of India. Before the advent of British rule, the village had been an autonomous community with almost economic self-sufficiency. The imperialistic rule of Britain turned the villages into feeders or adjuncts of the towns. Hence the villages have gradually been losing their charm and villagers are looking with great expectations to the towns. They would be glad to have some petty jobs in towns but would not like to find out ways and means to rehabilitate the social and economic life of the villages themselves. Due to their adherence to the Marxist ideology, the Asian socialists also had concentrated their efforts on the incipient industrial proletariat but it is a happy sign that now they are turning their attention also to the villages. [It is imperative to realize that no socio-economic movement can succeed in India which neglects the villages and concentrates its energies only on the urban population. It is essential, hence, to reconstruct village life. This was the dream of Gandhi. Sarvodaya makes efforts for turning that dream into actuality.]

Sarvodaya emphatically pleads for small communities. I do believe in the psychological, ethical and political value of small communities but there are some limitations also of small communities in the modern civilization. The problem of realistic political theory is—Is it possible to check the growth of megalopolitan urbanism? Is it possible to realize Gandhi's dream of an autonomous self-sufficient village commonwealth? I do not think that it is possible to check the rampant triumph of urbanization. One finds oneself, as if, in a vicious circle. If we want the country to be strong and able to protect itself against the depredations of the neighbours, we have to industrialize and the pace of our industrialization will be, considerably, determined by the competitive march of other powers in the race of industrial and military supremacy. If we want industrialization at a high speed, we will have to tolerate the slums and the chimneys

18 वृग्म स्थाप एतां रथीगाम्—*Rigveda*, X, 121, 10, and *Vajasaneyi Samhita* X, 20.

and the smoke and the other attendant evils of industrial life. With the growth of industrialization in India we see big new urban centres growing. It can be expected that within some years Chittaranjan, Durgapur, Vishakhapatnam and Sindri will begin competing with other big industrial towns like Tatanagar in terms of having a large area and a huge working population. Theoretically, it may be possible to conceive of the dispersion of the centres of production but the concentration of production is in the usual logic of economic rationality. It may be possible, theoretically, to conceive that instead of producing fifteen lacs of tons of steel at Tatanagar we could produce three lacs tons of steel at five centres each, but that will mean huge waste, duplication and even loss of efficiency. Of course, attempts can be made to control and minimize the adverse effects of modern industrial life. But it is not possible to build a system of village commonwealth and at the same time to have an economically and militarily powerful country.<sup>19</sup> The choice between a confederate system based on small community republics and a strong nation-state, is very difficult. India's greatest drawback in the past has been localism and centrifugalism. There can be a grave apprehension that the stress on self-reliant and self-governing village commonwealths may reinforce that centuries old curse of Indian history and instead of political integration we may find trends towards regionalism, extreme decentralization and eventual disruption. Internationalism and world citizenship has a strong emotional fascination for me. But when I read that our neighbours are arming to the teeth and when irresponsible fanatics are talking of an inevitable war with India, I feel inclined to favour a strong centre even at the possible cost of individual liberty and civil rights. I am putting, perhaps, the two alternatives of a strong centralized centre and individual liberty maintained in small village communities in an abstract and antithetical opposition. Perhaps the situation may not shape itself in that polarized way. Let me not be misunderstood. On aesthetic and moral grounds, I stand for small village communities but I have doubts about the realization of a federation of village republics in modern India.

## 5. The Economics of Sarvodaya

Sarvodaya, as already pointed out, starts with the acceptance of the fundamental primacy of the spirit. Its ethics of love, conversion

19 Gandhi had some peculiar notions on this subject. In an article in the *Harijan*, dated December 30, 1939, he wrote : "I suggest that, if India is to evolve along non-violent lines, it will have to decentralize many things. Centralization cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force. Simple homes from which there is nothing to take away require no policing ; the palaces of the rich must have strong guards to protect them against dacoity. So must huge factories. Rurally organised India will run less risk of foreign invasion than urbanized India, well-equipped with military, naval and air forces."

and heightened goodwill are derived from its metaphysical idealism. But to the Vedic and Vedantic conceptions of the supreme existence of a spiritual ultimate from which the universe and mankind derive their being and value, sarvodaya adds almost a communistic approach to wealth.

From the metaphysical arguments for theism, Vinoba Bhave has deduced several economic implications. If God is the supreme Existent and men are only temporary sojourners on this earth then everything belongs to God.<sup>20</sup> Thus Vinoba puts forward a divine theory of land ownership. God is the supreme owner and hence individuals subjected to ultimate death should not claim personal ownership over land. This simple argument, I feel, will fail to convince the village people whose attachment to their land is deep and elemental. Vinoba's other statement that all the great saints in this country have taught that land should not be kept under personal or private ownership<sup>21</sup> does not seem correct. It amounts to reading Marxist and Proudhonist ideas in the simple mystical songs of the Indian teachers and sages. Modern sarvodaya also extends the connotation of the rather individualistic and moralistic Gandhian conception of 'trusteeship'.<sup>22</sup> Although, sarvodaya has its roots in the Gandhian thought which is primarily individualistic, in the context of the grave social and economic crises of the present-day world, it has advanced towards the concept of a radically equalitarian social and economic structure. It does not seem correct to interpret the famous verse of the Ishopanishad—*tena tyaktena bhunjithah*, as teaching the ownership of all wealth by society. This verse accepts the individualist concept of property and simultaneously inculcates a spirit of non-attachment. It may be pointed out that the social ownership of wealth is a concept foreign to ancient Hindu political thought.<sup>23</sup>

Sarvodaya pleads for, (a) the repudiation of the proprietary possession or *malkiyat* of the non-producers, (b) the establishment of the proprietary possession or *malkiyat* of the producers, and (c) the neutralization or the negation of ownership.<sup>24</sup> It hopes to establish a society of producers or labourers. *Bhoodan* and *Sampattidan* are regarded as steps towards the realization of that kind of society.<sup>25</sup>

20 Vinoba Bhave, *Eka Bano Aur Neka Bano*, (in Hindi, Kashi, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangha, 1957), pp. 4-5.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

22 In an article in the *Harijan*, dated 25th October, 1952, Pyarelal, however, says that towards, the end of his life Gandhi had agreed that trusteeship "does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except in as much as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare." He had further accepted the possibility of the "legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth," and of "state-regulated trusteeship".

23 The whole concept of *Dayabhaga* (partition of inherited wealth) is based on the notion of private property.

24 Dharmadhikari, *Sarvodaya-Darshana*, p. 233.

Some of the basic techniques of sarvodaya are *Bhoodan*, *Sampattidan* and *Gramdan*. One great economic advantage that has been claimed for *Bhoodan* is that it effectuates the redistribution of land without the payment of any compensations. The land-holders are asked to keep only that portion which is essential for their requirements and surrender the rest to the community. The protagonists of *Bhoodan* believe in the social origin of all wealth and hence they interpret this surrender by the land-holders as an act of giving to the community what really belongs to it.<sup>25</sup> If *Bhoodan* and *Gramdan* are techniques of agrarian revolution based on moral force, *Sampattidan* is a significant path in the transformation of capitalism into the sarvodaya society. For the realization of *Sampattidan*, man is, at first, to utilize one-sixth of his wealth for the sake of society. Jayaprakash Narayan says :

“The next step is that of ‘Full Trusteeship’. Under ‘Trusteeship’, commercial and industrial enterprises would belong to the society and there would be no employer and employee. The management and labour would have joint responsibility to run them not for themselves but for the good of the society as a whole.”<sup>26</sup>

## 6. The Gramdan Movement

One of the gravest economic challenges in Asia is agrarian reform. The problem of land redistribution is facing all people interested in the growth and expansion of Indian economy. Although Zamindari has been abolished in India, there are still feudal oligarchs who have monopolized hundreds and even thousands of acres of land. The fragmentation of holdings is another severe handicap in the way of rationalized farming even on a small scale. There are also the problems of landless labour, chronic unemployment and constant under-employment. All these economic problems have to be understood in the more comprehensive framework of rampant exploitation, the domination of the so-called higher castes, terrific illiteracy and the mounting cost of living which is condemning the lower strata of the people to a state of semi-starvation for prolonged periods. The forcible expropriation of the legal owners of land as a remedy is out of the question now. No party in India believes in the violent seizure of land.<sup>27</sup> The protagonists of sarvodaya do not favour the idea that the complex agrarian problem of India can be solved by making laws for land redistribution. They are genuinely devoted to the Gandhian

25 Jayaprakash Narayan, *Kranti Ka Adhunik Prayoga*, (in Hindi. Patna, Janata Prakashan), p. 13.

26 Jayaprakash Narayan, *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, p. 17.

27 Since 1968, however, the Naxalites have launched a violent action against the *jotedars* (big cultivators) in Bengal. They have inspired the ‘Land Grab’ activity in some other parts also.

theory of change of heart.<sup>28</sup> They put forward the alternative of Gramdan, a scheme which was first put into operation in September, 1952, in a village named Mangroth in the Uttar Pradesh. Jayaprakash Narayan says : "In the beautiful revolution of *gramdan*, ownership was not abolished by force of any kind, but freely surrendered to the community."<sup>29</sup> A target of five lacs of villages for *Gramdan* has been fixed for the whole of the country. It is an achievement that more than five thousand villages have been obtained in *Gramdan*. It has been argued that in the *Gramdan* villages self-reliance and self-sufficiency would be developed.<sup>30</sup> The villages will have, in reserve, stock of food-grains and other articles of consumption sufficient to meet the needs of the inhabitants of the villages for two years.<sup>31</sup> This will foster a sense of community strength, cohesiveness and initiative. A cardinal economic notion in the *Gramdan* villages is supposed to be productive labour without competition.<sup>32</sup> Production is to be carried on mostly by manual labour.

Some of the accounts that I have read of the *Gramdan* villages

28 Jayaprakash Narayan, *Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 24, says that a real revolution is a revolution in the values of life. Law cannot change minds or hearts. According to J. Narayan, *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, p. 9, there are two reasons why sarvodaya does not believe in redistribution of land by legislation : (i) Sarvodaya wants to bring about a moral revolution which cannot be effected by laws, and (ii) it accepts the Gandhian maxim that legislation without conversion is a dead letter. There is danger of the counter-attack of the expropriated landlords, in case land is redistributed by law. Narayan says : "We also see ejection going on everyday even though there is a provision in the law against such a course. I am afraid, well-to-do persons would make it impossible for weak landless people to take possession of lands even if there be legislation for redistribution of land. That makes it clear why we need not be sitting idle looking forward to legislation." Narayan, however, does not rule out legislation. He says, *Ibid.*, p. 13 : "It is not as if legislation has no place in this technique, but it does not precede but follows conversion." According to Narayan, *Kranti Ka Adhunika Prayoga*, p. 5, Vinoba is of the view that he (Vinoba) is preparing the ground for legislation. Once the message of *Bhoodan* has spread in the villages of India, immediate and better legislation regarding land redistribution is bound to come.

29 Jayaprakash Narayan : *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 43.

30 The protagonists of sarvodaya have repudiated that *Bhoodan* and *Gramdan* are experiments in charity. They offer a Samkarite interpretation of it as *danam samvibhagah* (*dan* is equal division and equal sharing).

31 Jayaprakash Narayan, *Towards a New Society*, p. 161, makes the rather extreme proposal that "whatever is grown should be used first of all for the village and if, after feeding the village, there is a surplus, then and then only should they be asked to pay taxes or do whatever else they like." (Our Italics).

32 It is interesting to study what Gandhi said about co-operative farming in the *Harijan*, March 9, 1947 : "Gandhiji said in answer to a question that his notion of co-operation was that the land would be held in co-operation by the owners and tilled and cultivated also in co-operation. This would cause a saving of labour, capital, tools etc. The owners would work in co-operation and own capital, tool, animals, seeds, etc.; in co-operation. Co-operative farming of his conception would change the face of the land and banish poverty and idleness from their midst. All this was only possible if people became friends of one another and as one family."

have fascinated me. There appears to be remarkable similarity between the ideals of the *Gramdan* villages and some features of socio-economic life in Israel. But some limitations of *Gramdan* villages can be noted. First, what would be the solution if some individual raises the question of the reprivatization of the land to which he has, earlier, voluntarily renounced his rights. Is this renunciation of rights made in perpetuity? I do not sanction such an irrevocable step. Even Hobbes, that great apologist of the sovereignty of the Leviathan, has laid down that in case the sovereign fails to protect, the individual is not bound to obey the sovereign. Suppose, the individual is not satisfied with the workings and operations of the *Gramdan* village, then in that case some acute social and economic problems may arise. If in a family, descendants of the same ancestors can kill each other for petty things, I do not believe that it is utopian to visualize that even in the *Gramdan* villages there will be grave problems of social and economic struggle and there is bound to ensue a competitive strife for power, unless one believes that the kingdom of God has been concretely actualized in the *Gramdan* villages. It is possible that in a wave of enthusiasm an inhabitant might have agreed to renounce his right to his land in favour of the village, but after some years he may discover that he had made a mistake. Hence I think that the right of reprivatization of land should be reserved to the individual.

Another observation that I would like to make is that if in the *Gramdan* villages an outlook hostile to the mechanical civilization is fostered, it may, perhaps, act detrimentally to the gigantic schemes of industrialization that are being carried out in the rest of the country. We have to think in terms of India as a whole. It is harmful to operate in terms of two Indias—a vast sector of village India and another sector of industrial and urban India. A uniform and organic policy has to be devised for the entire country. If the villages, wedded to the cult of self-sufficiency and agrarianism will refuse to buy the products of the urban centres, the industrial growth of the country will be retarded.<sup>33</sup> It has been argued that the *Gramdan* economy will lead to the accentuation of production and to the increase of the purchasing power of the villagers. But if the *gramdan* economy is not co-ordinated with the economy of the rest of the country there may be a lop-sided growth and we may miss the exhilarating effects of the integral growth and expansion of the country's economic life.

Perhaps a third limitation of *Gramdan* may also be pointed out. So long as the pyramidal-vertical structure of the caste system operates it will be immensely difficult to implement the schemes of

<sup>33</sup> It is true that sarvodaya is not against industrialization. It aims to foster village industries. See Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodan Ganga*, Vol. II, pp. 141-42. But there is an undertone of hostility to urban industries. See Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodan Ganga*, Vol. II, p. 232.

*Gramdan*. Several so-called high castes consider it a sin to touch the plough. Moreover, in some villages there is the problem of the absence of effective social communication between Hindus and Moslems. So, there are dysfunctional elements of entropy in the village system. Thus the community ownership of land is only one aspect of the immense problems of village reconstruction. In some cases there may arise the problem of the ownership of those additional implements for cultivation which a man buys from his personal savings which he has made from his earnings in towns or cities. Thus there are serious economic problems all of which have to be considered together. It is highly utopian to view that once the economic rights of private ownership of land have been surrendered to the village community, an absolute moral and spiritual revolution would be effected in the country-side. The formula that the *Gramdan* movement visualises—village ownership of land as well as individual cultivation by the villagers (*khetgaon ka kheti kisan ki*)—will face great complications in its actual operation. It may be possible that individual cultivation will, again, become the prelude to the claim for individual ownership of the land. Furthermore, as noted above, the problem of the reform of the village economy is linked up with the entire problem of changes in the social structure also.

## 7. Conclusion

(In its quest for the preservation homeostasis and ennoblement of the village community, sarvodaya is trying to bolster a social entity which has been the bulwark of Indian culture and society for ages. At a time when the ruthless impact of the precipitous rise in prices, industrialism, rural capitalism and urbanisation is trying to take the life out of the villages of India, sarvodaya has stressed the immense significance of the village community.) It has seriously taken to heart the pregnant cry of Gandhi that India could not live if the villages declined. It is true that the trend of the modern world is towards industrialism, technological growth, megalopolitanism and concentration of political and economic power. Hence, in this context, it may be said, and it is also true to a great extent, that sarvodaya is a philosophy of agrarian protest. But even if this charge were true this would not detract from the eminent meaningfulness of this system. (Buddhism started as a protest against the contemporary decadent Brahmanical Hinduism ; Christianity was launched as a protest against the contemporary Israelite religion ; and Marxism is a protest against the evils of capitalism. Thus it is evident that being a philosophy of protest it does not detract from the vitality and significance of any system of thought.) Sometimes sarvodaya may be charged with being a philosophy of reaction, even. True it is that the villagism of sarvodaya may appear as a reaction against the modern trends of industrial civilization, but it is the merit of this system that to the accepted social and political philosophy of village

reconstruction, it has added the new radical gospels of the ownership of all land of the village by the village community itself and the formation of a decentralized village commonwealth. Hence, in sarvodaya, there is a synthesis of the old and the new. At the level of philosophical and ethical values, sarvodaya repudiates Darwinism, Marxianism and the Freudian theory of "complexes", but it is very modern in its economic theory because it emphatically seeks to do away with individual property in land. Private property in land has been the economic basis of ancient and medieval Indian culture.<sup>34</sup> Sarvodaya does never preach the preservation of the patriarchal village system with its stable economy, its caste stratification and its fossilized outlook. Instead, it pleads for breathing new life in the villages through the radical slogans of the political and economic sovereignty of the village.

The philosophy and sociology of sarvodaya, based on the insights and experiences of Gandhi, is a reassertion of the valuational and moral approach to the problems of mankind, which has been a part of ancient Indian culture for ages. The dissatisfaction with a merely institutional and external approach to problems, it shares with Vivekananda and Aurobindo. It is very easy for a group to talk of speculative idealism and moral conversion so long as it is striving to gain converts. But when it becomes organised and itself obtains power and influence it becomes amenable to all kinds of perversities and malformations. Communism started with a supreme moral idealism but when the communists captured power, they have manifested the virulence and rapacity of organised power in all its shamefaced ruthlessness. Like Plato, sarvodaya also believes in a regeneration of the human heart and mind. The philosophy and sociology of sarvodaya can add the moral tonic to Indian civilization. I will appreciate the utilization of its moral idealism for the perfection of the rule of law and social and economic justice. For the quest of the perfectionist goal of mankind we have to start with reforming and slowly bettering the imperfect institutional and legal devices that have been built up in the course of human evolution. I do believe in the necessity of ethical idealism for political and economic reconstruction. We should progressively perfect our institutional mechanisms and should simultaneously try to incorporate the spirit of ethical idealism in them to the maximum extent possible. The great contribution of sarvodaya lies in the reassertion of the Gandhian moral approach to the problems of man.

34 From the *Manusmriti* and the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya we can get no support for the view that land ever belonged to the village community as a whole.

# 21

## THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SARVODAYA

### 1. Philosophical Anarchism

The quest for power is one of the fundamental urges of man. At the elementary level, one may desire power for self-preservation and security. In a hostile world it is imperative to have some power to maintain one's existence. Without power a man feels helpless and at the mercy of opponents who would like to control him as a means for serving their own selfish ends. At a more complicated level, when one has amassed some amount of the constituents of power over others, he is driven by a relentless logic to seek for more and more power. There is, thus, established a vicious circle of competing individuals who often form groups which clamour for power and for ever-growing power. The danger is that if one group would not obtain ever greater power, its opponents will begin to dominate over it. In political struggles we find the causal role of this ruthless competition for power and dominance. In this dangerous game of politics we can discover the working of a fundamental urge for domination over others and also the working of an elementary rule that if one person renounces the attempt for obtaining power, others will begin to dominate over him. This never-ceasing quest for power has perverted the face of politics.

The communists dreamt of a stateless society based on co-operation where instead of administration over persons there would be only management of things. But the monopolistic control of both the political and economic avenues, instrumentalities and resources of power has given to the leaders of Soviet communism a degree of coercive control over their citizens undreamt of even by the pronounced champions of state sovereignty like Hobbes, Hegel and Austin. The concentration of power in the so-called socialist system of Russia is appalling and phenomenal. It was one of the major insights of Plato that in the *Republic* he separated the holders of political power—the guardians, from the holders of economic power—the husbandmen. Liberalism also propounded that the state should be concerned only or mostly with political functions and not meddle with production and distribution. Socialism guarantees jobs to every

one but the corollary of that is that all people are made dependent on the state for the barest morsel of food and hence they cannot resist its encroachments upon their freedom. After all, the power of the state is wielded not by some exalted abstraction but by normal human beings and it is maintained that party leaders and bureaucrats are the last examples of the human species who can be trusted to be the true and just custodians of the rights and justice of the people.

From very early times, both in theory and practice, politics has been equated with power. The radical school of Greek sophists interpreted politics as the art of the dominance of the stronger. Callicles ridiculed the philosophical quest for moral perfection. Hobbes interpreted human psychology in terms of an endless quest for power. The German conservatives and imperialists stood for the power of the militarist state. But Gandhi condemned the state as the concentration of violence. He dreamt of a society rid of all violence and force. The Marxists and anarchists also refer to the exploitationist character of the present capitalist state which flourishes on the suppression of the workers.

Sarvodaya accepts the sacrosanct character of the human spirit. It is, hence, emphatic on the inculcation of the value of freedom, equality, justice and fraternity. It, therefore, is opposed to the state machine.<sup>1</sup> The state is not the terrestrial reflection of the merciful divine being but is a soulless mechanical instrument to effectuate the will of those who have the manipulating skill, dash, cunning and capacity to control the governmental structure. In tracing the evolution of the state, Vinoba Bhave says :

"In the early stage it was unrestrained violence that held the faith. Gradually man learnt to curb and limit his violence and the institution called the state came into existence. The formation of the state did limit violence up to a degree. The advent of the apparatus of government created a new kind of law and order. Even Vedas had said that coercive power of the state was personification of *Dharma*. But gradually the state grew stronger, became more and more powerful till it became an all-powerful state with the power of destroying the whole world with its military might based on nuclear weapons."<sup>2</sup>

In most cases, the state does operate with the methods of intimidation, coercion, persecution and organised violence. Hence Gandhi was thoroughly opposed to the state. He pleaded for Swarajya—the inner rule of man over himself. He wanted that the Swarajya should

1 Jayaprakash Narayan, *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, (Tanjore, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangha, 1955), p. 43 : "It is not possible to achieve any success through developing the power of the state."

2 Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodan to Gramdan*, (Tanjore, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangha, 1956), p. 7.

be based on the moral sovereignty of the people. But while Gandhi believed in the spiritualization of politics, Vinoba stands almost for the nullification of politics.

Sarvodaya aims to replace thoroughly the manipulative politics of power by the participant politics of co-operation.<sup>3</sup> It emphasizes mutualistic activities spontaneously engaged in by the people. According to Vinoba Bhave, there are ten criteria of an ideal polity :

- (i) International fraternity.
- (ii) The conscious, spontaneous (as far as possible) and hearty co-operation of all the inhabitants of the country.
- (iii) The identity of the good of the capable minority and the general majority.
- (iv) The orientation towards the universal and equal development of all.
- (v) The widest dispersion of political sovereignty.
- (vi) The least amount of government.
- (vii) The easiest availability of *tantra* or justice (?)—(*Sulabhatama tantra*).
- (viii) The least possible expenditure.
- (ix) The lowest degree of external protection.
- (x) The universal, uninterrupted and neutral or objective spread of knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Partyless Democracy

The activities and operations of the political parties in modern states become mainly oriented to the ruthless pursuit of power. Even in democracies, in spite of the theoretical adherence to the principles of the sovereignty of the electorate and the consent of the people as the basis of government, in actual practice, there is the domination of the all-powerful parties.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, there are no occasions

<sup>3</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan, *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, (Kashi, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, 1958), p. 48, distinguishes the politics of the people from the politics of party and power. The aim of sarvodaya politics is to see "that all centres of power are abolished. The more this new politics grows the more the old politics shrinks. A real withering away of the state."

<sup>4</sup> Vinoba Bhave, *Swarajya-Shashtra*, (in Hindi). New Delhi, Sasta Sahitya Mandal, 1953), p. 25. English translation of the passage by Dr. V. P. Varma.

<sup>5</sup> The criticisms of representative democracy by sarvodaya, however, do not imply in the least, any support to absolutism or regimentation. True it is, that absolutism, totalitarianism and fascism as well as Gandhian sarvodaya are critics of the democratic system but that does not mean that they are similar. As a matter of fact they are poles asunder. While totalitarianism of all types tend to subvert the values of democracy, Gandhian sarvodaya postulates  
(Contd.)

for the continuous dynamic political initiative of the masses and for the sovereign exercise of that general will of the community conceived almost as a moral entity which Rousseau regarded as the essence of democracy. In the second half of the eighteenth century Rousseau had said that the people of England are free only during election days. But with the modern devices of propaganda, control of information, transmission and the dominating and corrosive influences of wealth which can be brought to bear on the electorate, it is not possible for the people to make genuinely independent choices even from amongst the limited number of candidates who are put forward at the time of elections. Some organised parties in India, it is said, have resorted even to physical assaults of their opponents.<sup>6</sup> Hence the people in modern democracies are not genuinely free even during election days. The reckless use of violence and money for the sake of gaining offices and power has done havoc to the democratic political system.<sup>7</sup> It is true that direct participation of the people in all the important activities of the state is not possible today. But the moment indirect or representative democracy is accepted as the governmental form for a country, parties with their octopus-like grabbing hold appear on the scene. But it will not solve the problem if the crudities, the vulgar devices for obtaining power and the perverse techniques for maintaining themselves in office resorted to by parties are regarded as final and inevitable. The concept of Lokaniti is a way to solve the problem.<sup>8</sup> Sarvodaya is definitely hostile to

an extension of democratic ethics. It pleads for the moralization and spiritualization of the democratic set-up. Both Jayaprakash Narayan, *Towards a New Society*, (Delhi, 1958), pp. 89-90, and Vinoba Bhave, *Rajniti Se Lokaniti Ki Or*, (in Hindi : Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangha, 1957), p. 21, have criticized the democratic practice of giving one vote to every individual, irrespective of his attainments and qualities. But I think that the alternative to equal suffrage will be plural voting or weighted suffrage which is an adjunct of oligarchy and aristocracy and which will never be supported by sarvodaya.

6 V. P. Varma (Director), *A Study of the Fourth General Elections in Bihar*, (Patna, Patna University, 1968), pp. 70-72.

7 The principal defects of modern parliamentary (and also of the presidential system) democracy, in the opinion of the advocates of sarvodaya, are :—

(i) Corruptions and perversities attendant upon the acquisition of political power.

(ii) Rampant economic and social inequality.

(iii) Accentuation of the competitive craze for more and more commodities resulting in the dislocation of international political balance.

(iv) One of the principal defects of the Indian parliamentary democracy is that this system is a foreign importation in India and hence has not been able to draw the natural affection and loyalty of the people.

8 Dharmadhikari would almost support the Guild Socialist proposal for functional representation, with his view that the political units should run parallel to the economic units. Dharmadhikari, *Sarvodaya-Darshana*, (in Hindi, Kashi, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, 1957), pp. 227-29, says that for the transformation of the foundations of democracy, it is essential that there should be the minimum separation between the economic unit, the political (i.e., administrative) unit and the unit for representation.

the mechanism of representative democracy<sup>9</sup> which amounts, in actual practice, to the dictatorship of the cabinet and the hegemony of the party oligarchy. To counteract them, sarvodaya advocates partyless democracy.

The concept of partyless democracy will be thoroughly realized only at the full consummation of the Bhoojan movement. But positive steps in that direction have to be taken immediately. *There are four dominant technics for the realization of partyless democracy.* The ways to realize partyless democracy have to start at the bottom.

(I) In the nearly six lacs of the villages of India attempts should be made to nominate the workers, whom by universal consensus, the village-inhabitants consider to be their best "servants".<sup>10</sup> These workers will constitute the members of the Panchayat. This nomination would be a reflection of the confidence which these workers have created in the minds of the village population. The various technics of Bhoojan, Gramdan etc., are concrete and vital steps in the rehabilitation of the community spirit and the unanimous nomination of the members of the Panchayat by the villagers, without the operation of any of the traditional mechanisms of party action, will be an important indication of the growth of community mobilisation and integration. The pattern devised at the village level will be repeated also at the other higher levels. The Thana Panchayat will be chosen by the members of the Village Panchayat. The District Panchayat will be chosen by the members of the Thana Panchayat.<sup>11</sup> The provincial administration and the central administration will be constituted on a similar principle.<sup>12</sup> This will be the institutional device for the realization of partyless democracy.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan, "The Political Theory of Bhoojan", *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, p. 25, says, "The device of democratic elections cannot equate 500 representatives with eighteen crores (counting only the adults) of the people. To the extent the eighteen crores look after their affairs directly, to that extent the powers and functions of the state are restricted and real democracy is practised."

<sup>10</sup> Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoojan Tujna*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1954), p. 108, says that the *Gram-panchayat* was based on the unanimity of the five. He pleads for the adoption of the principle of "the unanimity among all persons of honesty and goodwill" in place of the principle of deciding issues by a majority vote.

<sup>11</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan, *Kranti Ka Adhunik Prayoga*, (Patna, Janata Prakashana, 1954), pp. 11-12.

<sup>12</sup> This scheme is partly based on the *Outline Scheme of Swaraj*, prepared by C. R. Das and Bhagwan Das. According to that scheme the provincial panchayats were to consist of members elected by the district panchayat and the All-India panchayat "should consist of members elected by the provincial panchayats in the proportion of one for every thirty lacs of population." But in the sarvodaya scheme there is no provision for a "consulting Senate" elected by the All-India Panchayat and consisting of distinguished men of character and wisdom for advising the All-India and the provincial panchayats, as in the *Outline Scheme of Swaraj*.

<sup>13</sup> Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoojan-Ganga*, (Kashi, 1957), Vol. I, p. 253, says that the material power will reside in the villages while the moral power will be exercised by the people in the centre (*i.e.*, central government).

From the theoretical standpoint, we can find the possible operation of two significant principles in this scheme of partyless democracy. The first, obviously, is that party politics and electoral mechanisms are to be replaced by the operation of community consensus. The principle of majority decision is to be replaced by unanimity. The second principle is the operation of indirect nominations. For example, the members of the Thana-panchayat are chosen not by all the inhabitants of the Thana but by the members of the village-panchayats of the Thana. Similarly the District-panchayat is not to be nominated by all the inhabitants of the district considered *en masse* but only by the members of the Thana-panchayats of that district. The provincial and central administrators or members of the provincial panchayat and central panchayat are also to be chosen on the basis of indirect nomination. Thus at the levels of the province and the centre also, the principle of indirect nomination or choosing<sup>14</sup> is to be set up.

This principle of indirect nomination or indirect election<sup>15</sup> is defective from two standpoints. Its first principal inadequacy is that, in one sense, it seriously detracts from the moral and political stature of the individual citizens. At present, the individual elector directly elects the members of the Parliament and the legislative assemblies.<sup>16</sup> But in the scheme of partyless democracy, contemplated by sarvodaya, the adult villager will have a share only in choosing the members of the Village-panchayat. He will not directly choose the members of the Thana-panchayat, the District-panchayat, the Provincial-panchayat and the Central-panchayat. Thus, in the name of choosing by consensus, the individual adult village elector is being deprived of a very important political right he enjoys today, that is, of directly choosing the members of the State Legislative Assembly and the Parliament.

Another defect of the principle of indirect nomination, from the practical standpoint, will be the enormous complication in the choosing of the different panchayats. Students of political science know that political parties also educate public opinion and crystallize political issues because they focus on the merits and demerits of the different contestants in the election field. At the village level, or even at the Thana level, it may be possible to choose the members of the Panchayat by consensus because the villagers or even the numerous inhabitants of the Thana are expected to know their 'servants' or in the Aristotelian language their best 'friends'. But

14 Dharmadhikari, *Sarvodaya-Darshana*, p.241. Jayaprakash Narayan, *Towards a New Society*, p. 168, says : "Perhaps some sort of indirect system of election to the higher levels of government or management or administration would be necessary."

15 For support of indirect election, see Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodan Ganga*, Vol. IV, pp. 28-29.

16 In some States and in Lok Sabha, however, there is the nomination of the Anglo-Indian representatives.

I do not see, how without the operation of the party mechanism, the members of, say, over fifty district panchayats in the Uttar Pradesh will discover their best servants so as to nominate or choose them for being members of the provincial or state Panchayat.

(II) There is a second significant technic advocated by sarvodaya for the realization of partyless democracy. The aim of sarvodaya is to establish a society which will be free from the malady of parties.<sup>17</sup> Hence it refuses to meddle with present party politics. A person who had dedicated himself to this movement will not seek any elective post "and for life he will not be able to participate in elections. He may, however, cast his vote as his conscience tells him."<sup>18</sup> Partyless democracy is supposed to be the final political consummation of the sarvodaya movement. But so long as that final stage has not been realized, in casting his vote, the believer in the philosophy of sarvodaya, will exercise a judicious choice between the contenders. He will vote for the candidates of that party which, in his judgment, can best serve the interests of the people.

(III) A third formula of partyless democracy has also been pointed out. This important technic, to be followed in the early stages of the movement, is to invite various parties to co-operate in sarvodaya work. These parties may have different ideologies but their help can be solicited to the extent they are willing to co-operate. This kind of co-operative work will bring home to these workers the urgency of effectuating the all-round revolution which sarvodaya envisages. A further stage in that same direction will be the concentrated efforts by all political parties towards the realization of the ideal of sarvodaya. Vinoba says :

"As regards the related question of our policy towards the different political parties, I am inclined to take the view that they should cease as different parties and combine to form a united front made up of all good and honest people in the country carrying out commonly agreed programmes. And to that end I try to put before the people a programme of work which may be acceptable to all and in which all can join forgetting their differences. This will tend to draw the parties nearer one another with the result that their differences will gradually shrink and the point of agreement increase. Now we have such a programme in *bhoodan* which is acceptable to all, which helps the country go forward and withal makes for the growth of *jana-shakti*—the inherent strength of the people."<sup>19</sup>

17 Jayaprakash Narayan, *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, p. 10 : "We in India have decided not to fight village elections on party lines. And what is right for a village is also right for the nation."

18 Jayaprakash Narayan, *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, p. 30.

19 Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodan Yajna*, p. 106.

(IV) Sometimes it has been suggested that a fourth important concrete step in the evolution of partyless democracy will be the neutralization of the party sting in the Legislatures and the Parliament. Even if the present technic of getting elected to the legislative bodies on party tickets continues, it may be devised that having entered those bodies, the element of party-belongingness of the representatives ceases. Instead of voting as party members, they should vote as representatives of the nation. Instead of being guided by the party whips, they should look to the high court of their best conscience. The ministers will not be chosen on party lines. Every member will be asked to submit a list of names and those obtaining the highest preferences will be elected. This seems to be a nice proposal provided it can work. I have serious doubts about the workability of this proposal and, hence, for the present, I support the organisation of the cabinet on the basis of party homogeneity.

It is true that the growth of factionalism and partisanship is one of the greatest evils of democracy. But it does not seem possible to abolish parties. *We have to abolish partisanship and not parties.* Sometimes I also feel that it is not possible to identify politics with party politics. After all, parties are a creation of the modern western civilization. Parties begin to crystallize in the seventeenth century England. But can any one be correct in saying that there was no politics before the seventeenth century? For centuries there have been some form or other of organised political activity without the party mechanism. It is true that with the growth of the enfranchise-ment of the people, parties have come to occupy very significant positions. But if sarvodaya workers are sceptical of modern party politics, they can work as advisers in the administrative set-up. They may do so in their individual capacity. With the growth of the complexities of modern civilization, the significance of advisory councils and advisory bodies has increased. Hence I think that instead of renouncing all types of politics it will be in popular interest, if the sarvodaya workers choose to work as members of advisory councils and advisory bodies at all levels—central, provincial, district and taluka. This can be a type of work of concrete immediate significance. Instead of retiring into works of purely agrarian reconstruction, if the administrative institutional mechanism is sought to be reformed, it will be of great value and will confer solid advantages. Hence I think that instead of getting identified with purely rural work and activities, the problems of administrative reform should also be tackled by the workers and leaders of sarvodaya. If leaders who are men of strong moral character and abnegation choose to become political and administrative advisers, there is a chance that the noble impact of Gandhian teachings can be felt on the Indian government.

### **3. Decentralization or Gramrajya**

Both democracy and communism are engulfed by great corrosive

forces. The competitive struggle for power among the various parties with their oligarchical-pyramidal structure of the leadership-hierarchy almost renders democracy a farce.<sup>20</sup> It converts the concept of popular sovereignty into an empty slogan. The key-policy decisions are made by a few leaders and the vast masses are expected tamely to acquiesce in them. The people have nearly retired from the function of governing. Their is the glorious privilege of choosing their governors from amongst a few powerful competing candidates who have behind them all the paraphernalia of mobilising, influencing and occasionally even of intimidating the people. Hence democracy needs radical transformation. The experiments of communism in some countries have still further tightened the control of an authoritarian party over the people. Communism dreamt of establishing the rule of the proletariat and the peasants in place of the dictatorship of the minority of the bourgeoisie, but, in practice, the communists have built up a gigantic state machine bolstered up by an army and a band of technocrats and officials and working like a mechanical automaton under the whimsical dictates of the fortunate few who have managed to get themselves flung to the topmost positions. Hence the people as a concrete whole composed of vast millions have ceased to be effectively operative political entities both in the democratic and the communistic systems. Against this nauseating whirlpool and dirty quagmire of struggles for power, sarvodaya marks a healthy reaction.

In place of the ever-growing centralization of power, sarvodaya pleads for decentralization.<sup>21</sup> Gandhi was hostile to all types of

20 Roberto Michels, *Political Parties*, (New York, International Library, 1915). For a critical note on the "Iron Law of Oligarchy," see J. LaPalombara and M. Weiner (ed.), *Political Parties and Political Development*, (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 69-73.

21 *Planning for Sarvodaya*, (Kashi, Rajghat, 1958), 2nd ed. pp. 74-75 : "Decentralization is not a device to turn back the hands of the clock and go back to archaic methods of production that primitive communities were satisfied with. It does not want to renounce the benefits of technological progress. It only wants to ensure that the benefits of science and technology enable us to preserve the essence of democracy even while avoiding drudgery and maximizing production and employment. Decentralization will, therefore, involve a radical revolution in the very concept of industrialization, in the purposes which technology will be called upon to serve. Such a decentralized system of production has innumerable advantages over centralized methods of production. There will be no concentration of the ownership of the instruments of production to lead to monopoly, capitalism or totalitarianism. Workers can own the instruments of production that they use. This will abolish the distinction between employer and employee. 'Employment' itself will become a misnomer. The worker will cease to be a wage-earner who is not concerned with the processes or the consequence of his work. He will experience the joy of creative work, and will lose no initiative. This will maximize full and integral employment as well as the volume of production. Moreover, since production and consumption will be integrated with needs of specific areas, the overhead costs of transporting raw materials and produce, and maintaining

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concentration of power and he pleaded for deconcentration both at the economic and the political levels.<sup>22</sup> Jefferson also had visualised that the foundations of democracy lay in small-scale agrarian community. He had a genuine fear of the concentration of power at the federal centre. Decentralization, as advocated by Gandhi and Jefferson, requires the healthy evolution and mobilisation of creative citizenship. It is fantastic to believe that a law of the parliament or the diet or the assembly can bring about the desired change. What is essential is that the people should be trained and disciplined for the management and control of their own affairs. This requires that in the early stages there should be a band of self-abnegating workers on the spot who should help the people in the art of doing their own business. These workers should behave as the brethren of the people and not their rulers and educate the people through their co-operative solicitude. The enervated Indian population which has lost the habits of dynamic initiative and self-reliance for centuries is becoming utterly dependent on the officers of the state. Gandhi had wanted that the village panchayat "should function only under a law of its own making."<sup>23</sup> But even these panchayats, instead of being centres of healthy legislation and their implementation have become the dens of casteism and other perverse types of baneful factors and influences. Hence one of the foremost problems of decentralization is to make the panchayats function as spontaneous training-ground in village republicanism and participating community democracy. Thus the problem of decentralization is not solved by merely speaking against the evils of concentration of power or by conferring minor judicial and executive functions and powers on the Panchayat or on the Mukhia and the Sarpanch.<sup>24</sup> According to the philosophy of sarvodaya, instead of bolstering centralization,

an elaborate machinery for managing the processes of distribution, will all be reduced to the minimum. Nor will there be anything like the tremendous social costs of a highly centralized system of production. It is equally clear that such a decentralized system of production can be organised with much more moderate investments of capital than those needed for a centralized system of production and that the ratios of output to investment and investment to employment will be greater in decentralized production. It seems to be a fallacy to believe that industrialization, in the accepted sense of the term, will lead to any appreciable increase in employment."

22 In an article in the *Harijan*, January 18, 1942, Gandhi pointed out that without decentralization it was impossible to achieve human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. He wrote : "Centralization as a system is inconsistent with non-violent structure of society." J.C. Kumarappa, *Economy of Permanence*, (Kashi, 1957, third edition), pp. 159-67 says : "Democracy in economics must be based on decentralized production in villages on individual basis." (p. 160). Also p. 171.

23 M. K. Gandhi, *Panchayat Raj*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan, 1959), p. 10.

24 Jayaprakash Narayan, *Towards a New Society*, p. 158, says : "The present panchayats are not democratic. They are not working on a democratic basis. You might give them votes and you might give them some powers and you may hold elections, but in the village itself neither in the economic, nor in the social nor in the political sphere is democracy at work."

nationalization and state capitalism in the name of the welfare state, the primary need is to discipline and train the people in the art of managing efficiently their economic, social and administrative problems. One of the arguments advanced by the protagonists of sarvodaya is that in a decentralized political system there is less of difference of opinion and hence there is greater hope for realizing the concept of partyless democracy.<sup>25</sup>

According to the sarvodaya conception, the realization of village self-government—*Gramraj*, is postulated upon the exercise of all political authority by the inhabitants of the village.<sup>26</sup> The same principle of genuine and real administration by the people themselves would operate at the district and provincial levels of administration also. Instead of being mechanical foci executing the will of the central government these will be organic areas of self-government. The advocates of sarvodaya are quite correct in holding that if genuine self-government or real democracy is practised at the village level, then that would be the greatest bulwark against any totalitarian encroachment.

The fear has sometimes been expressed that this *gramraj* may become an exercise in parallel government with little means of co-ordination. But there is no plan or idea to dispense with the mechanism of the central government. So long as the central government exists, its services may be utilized as occasion arises. "The central authority, so long as it exists, would be like a danger chain in a railway train. Passengers do not always have their attention fixed on this chain, but they make use of it in times of danger."<sup>27</sup>

Sarvodaya accepts the universalization of self-government. This means the activization and recruitment of the people for vigilant and constant participation in co-operative action. If the officials at the top are liable to perversity and corruption, it is equally essential to guard effectively against the corruptions of the workers and petty

25 Sometimes it has been stated by the protagonists of sarvodaya that centralization is the root cause of party strifes. Once the attempt is made to discuss and decide local issues at local levels there will be no scope for partisanship. See, Bhagvandas Kela : *Rajayavastha : Sarvodaya Dristi Se*, (Daraganj, Allahabad, Bhartiya Granthamala, 1955), pp. 76-81. But Kela's arguments do not appear convincing to me. The experience of the village affairs is enough to show that on the pettiest problems there are chances of great divergences of opinions. Wherever the interests of some individuals or a group are threatened, they tend to fight for the preservation of their rights and interests. Hence there does not seem to be any significant and necessary logical connexion between centralization and the growth of party system.

26 According to Jayaprakash Narayan, *Towards a New Society*, (New Delhi, 1958), pp. 163-67, *gram-swaraj* is the result of two important causal categories : (a) *gramdan*, and (b) *gram samkalpa* or *gram svavalambana*, i.e., village self-sufficiency. Narayan, *ibid.*, p. 99, asserts that the surest foundation of democracy in India would be the self-governing village units.

27 Quoted in Jayaprakash Narayan, *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, (Tanjore, 1955), p. 1.

officials at the level of the villages. Sarvodaya wants to elevate the people. Hence the people and not the central parliament or cabinet have to become the focus of political attention. This is the significance of the replacement of *Rajaniti* by *Lokaniti*.<sup>28</sup> Vinoba says :

"Swaraj has come. But do people feel the warmth of it ? The very term *swaraj*, or self-government, implies decentralization of authority. The principle has, therefore, to be applied to every practicable limit, to all fields of life, social, economic, and political. *Gramdan*, or villagisation, brought to their very cottages the power that really belonged to them, but of which, unfortunately, they were not conscious, and which, again not less unfortunately, indeed, was progressively centralised at places like Delhi and Kurnool, resulting in the progressive decline of their liberty and progressive rise in their poverty and sufferings. It is through *gramdan* alone that the Delhi Raj of today could be transformed into the *gram-rajya* and *Ram-rajya*. Every village would then become a state in miniature with all the departments efficiently functioning in the village itself."<sup>29</sup>

The movement of sarvodaya is keen upon immediate steps being taken for the implementation of those policies of allocation and distribution of resources and pursuit of the methods which are calculated to establish a truly non-violent democracy. Even the welfare state has a tendency to become totalitarian because under it the state assumes ever larger number of functions and with the increase of functions is bound to come increase of power.<sup>30</sup> According to sarvodaya, this infantile parasitic tendency to lean on the state would lead to the withering away of the instinct and habit of liberty. It will eventually lull the people into the dungeons of totalitarian regimentation. Hence it is essential to learn the art of self-reliance and discipline.<sup>31</sup> Freedom being the desired objective, sarvodaya wants

28 The differences between the orientations of *Rajaniti* and *Lokaniti* can be thus indicated :—

<i>Rajaniti</i>	<i>Lokaniti</i>
(a) government	(a) self-restraint
(b) power	(b) freedom
(c) control	(c) discipline
(d) competition for obtaining sovereignty and rights.	(d) performance of duties.

29 Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodan to Gramdan*, (Tanjore, 1956), p. 41. Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodana Ganga*, Vol. II, p. 107, pleads for some sort of a federation of four lacs of villages. The central authority therein will be merely advisory.

30 Jayaprakash Narayan, *Towards a New Society*, (Congress for Cultural Freedom, New Delhi, 1958), p. 83 ; Jayaprakash Narayan, *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, p. 44 : "It (The Welfare State) is a slow-moving conception of changing society into a socialistic one." For criticism of the ideal of welfare state, see, Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodana Ganga*, Vol. IV, pp. 26-27.

31 Hence sarvodaya pleads for the substitution of *shashana* by *anushashana*.

people to take to heart the famous maxim of Thoreau which Gandhi used to repeat that that government is the best which governs the least.<sup>32</sup> It stresses the cultivation of real *Janashakti*—the potency, capacity and strength of the people.<sup>33</sup> Only this can be an effective antidote to the dominance of *Dandashakti* or the power of coercive violence. As an ultimate ideal, however, sarvodaya is satisfied not with limiting or regulating the state machine but with the total elimination of the state.<sup>34</sup>

#### 4. Political Implications of Sarvodaya

(a) *Repudiation of the Marxist Theory of Class Struggle.* The fundamental theme of sarvodaya is the realization of the happiness and elevation of all.<sup>35</sup> At the political level, this has two significant implications. They are, first, the repudiation of the theory of class struggle, and second, the safeguarding of the interests and rights of the minority. The concept of class struggle is based on the acceptance of the existence of divergent and even antithetical interests in the social structure. Sarvodaya, on the other hand, starts with the notion of the community as a reality almost *sui generis* and it holds that the aim of social and political efforts is not to serve the disproportionate interests of the dominant classes but to maximize the good of the entire community. Sarvodayism attacks the repugnant and perverse consequences of egoism and the lust for power and wealth. Hence, it stresses the necessity of disinterested service. Service, dedication, and the realization of common good are its techniques and formulas and it is opposed to the Marxist theory of class struggle which favours utilization of violence.<sup>36</sup> Once it is

32 The sarvodayists have borrowed the Marxist formula for the communist society that there will be only administration of things and not government over persons. See, Dharmadhikari, *Sarvodaya-Darshana*, p. 233.

33 According to Sarvodaya, there are two techniques for the stabilization of *jana-shakti* or the power of the people—(i) constant propaganda and publicity (*vichara-prachara*), and (ii) decentralization of power. The aim is not merely to change the opinion of the people but to change their heart. Thus alone can the environmental and institutional change be brought about. See Bhagwan Das Kela, *Raja Vyavastha : Sarvodaya Dristi Se*, pp. 92-94.

34 Vinoba Bhave, *Rhodan to Gramdan*, p. 8.

35 According to Vinoba Bhave, *Swarajya-Shashtra*, pp. 56-57, there are four pillars on the basis of which the edifice of the ideal state oriented to the happiness and good of the people can be erected.

(i) *Sevabhava* = The instinct of service.

(ii) *Sivavalambana* = Self-reliance.

(iii) *Ahimsaka trana* = non-violent protection.

(iv) *Tulya Parishramika* = Equality of wages.

36 Explaining the difference between the Marxian and the Gandhian approaches to the social structure, Jayaprakash Narayan, *Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 25, says: "Socialism wishes to advance by setting class against class, Gandhism by cutting across classes. Socialism wishes to destroy classes by making one class victorious over the other—which seems to be somewhat illogical. Gandhism wishes to abolish classes by so bringing the classes together that there are no class distinctions left."

accepted that violence has to be renounced as a basis of organised social existence, there is no place for the advocacy of the disruptio-nist theory of the struggle of mutually opposed classes. Sarvodaya hence, pleads for the replacement of the concept of class struggle by the more rational and organic theory of social good and harmony.<sup>37</sup> This social harmony is to be realized not by mere verbal profession. It is to be experienced in daily conduct. There has to be a deliberate extension of good feelings. The aim is not the forcible expropria-tion of the wealth of the rich but the conscious and spontaneous practice of 'sharing' the goods one has ready at hand. In this way, there can be an overpowering accentuation of the ideal of sharing and almost a mass moral revolution oriented to the effectuation of a peaceful social reconstruction can be brought about. The aim of this revolution is not to seize power but to bring about a change in one's outlook and hierarchy of values. The propensity to accumulate has to give place to the propensity to share.<sup>38</sup>

But the repudiation of the concept of class-struggle<sup>39</sup> and the acceptance of the ideal of social harmony do not mean the perpetua-tion of the present *status quo* with landlords and big farmers on one side and small farmers and agricultural labourers on the other, and the exploitation of the latter by the former. In his earlier days of political leadership, Gandhi was in favour of retaining the Zamindars but, later on, his views underwent a radical transformation and he talked endlessly about a social structure rid of all class stratifica-tions.<sup>40</sup> Sarvodaya contemplates not the retention of the system of exploitation and coercion but it wants to bring about a regime of absolute social equality and the maximum of economic equality too. On the plane of social idealism, sarvodaya and communism both accept social equality. But the vital difference is found in the profound attachment of sarvodaya to the ethics and technics of non-violence. Sarvodaya contemplates a regime of equality and justice to be brought about by the dynamic transforming power of love and non-violence.

#### (b) *The Repudiation of the Concept of Majoritarianism.* The

37 Cf. J. B. Kripalani, *Class Struggle*, (Kashi, 1958), p. 93. Dharendra Muzumdar, *Bhoodan Yajna : The Great Challenge of the Age*, (Banaras, 1954), p. 31, says that in place of class conflict Vinoba stands for class conversion.

38 Jayaprakash Narayan, *Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 116: "Wealth can be distribu-ted by law, but shared only voluntarily. Distribution of wealth may be uncertain step towards socialism, but sharing of wealth is real and full socialism."

39 Mahatma Gandhi was tremendously opposed to the concept of class-war. He stated, *The Amrit Bazar Patrika*, August 3, 1934: "In India a class-war is not inevitable, but it is avoidable if we have understood the message of non-violence. Those who talk about class-war as being inevitable, have not under-stood the implications of non-violence or have understood them only skin-deep." He pleaded that the struggle of labour against capital was a vicious circle and was to be avoided at all cost.

40 Jayaprakash Narayan, *Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 20.

second implication from the sarvodayist conception of the organic reality of the community is the repudiation of the element of superior virtue supposed to be contained in the judgment of a majority of heads.<sup>41</sup> If the community is an organic structure and if all the individual members of it are bearers of moral and cultural values, then there is no place for jeopardizing the lives and interests of even the lowest and the humblest.<sup>42</sup> From the superficial standpoint of having got oneself registered in the list of the component members of a specific group or having paid the requisite fees for membership of a particular party, one may be in a majority or a minority. But if truth is the supreme canon and if the opinion, wish and aspiration of every one member is precious, then, in that case, one has to work on the basis of consensus and not of majority.<sup>43</sup> There has to be discussion and debate and through the dialectics of argument and counter-argument some fundamental areas of mutual goodwill emerge. This, and not the numerical counting of heads is the genuine method of social action. Hence, according to sarvodaya, the concept of majoritarianism has to be replaced by the concept of consensus. Sarvodaya is not satisfied with the various safeguards of proportional representation that have been devised to protect the interests of the minority. It adheres, rather, to the Gandhian concept that the superficial numerical criteria of many and few have to be replaced by a fundamental adherence to the good of the community. Sometimes it is said that different types of parties and associations grow in response to the diversity of social interests. But sarvodaya thinks that this mechanical conception of plurality of social interests has to be replaced by the moral conception of the homogeneity of the fundamental interests of the society. Thus sarvodaya aims to replace the concept of majoritarianism by the concept of fundamental consensus. But it has to be watched that some clever individuals and groups do not manipulate the concept of consensus to suit their own ends. Consensus is a vague notion. If it is identical with unanimity, then, in practice, it may lead to great confusion and disgusting debates. In Poland there was the system of *liberum veto*,<sup>44</sup> according to which, unanimity was required for the transaction of state business. But, in practice, it proved to be absolutely unworkable since even one defiant member could block all transactions.

(c) *Bhoojan and Satyagraha*. Satyagraha is one of the cardinal concepts in the Gandhian political theory. Satyagraha means a deliberate and conscious assertion of truth\* and right against the entrenched strength of the vested interests. From individual non-

41 Vinoba Bhave wrote in the *Harijan*, January 17, 1953 : "Rule of the majority is the law of the day ; whether the majority has or has not scruples and character, it does not matter at all. Is not rule of the majority only brute force ? How can you differentiate between the rule of the regiment, rule of money and rule of the majority ? What is it if it is not brute force ?"

42 Webster's Third New International Dictionary, (1968 ed.), p. 1304.

cooperation to organised civil disobedience on a mass scale, there are different forms of Satyagraha. It may appear that Satyagraha, as conceived by Gandhi, was a more dynamic and aggressive technic as compared to the supposedly passive technic of *dan*. But Vinoba believes that *bhoodan* itself is a Satyagraha. He believes in argumentation and compromise. He, however, does not rule out peaceful struggle.<sup>43</sup> It is possible to visualize numerous occasions when the enlightened conscience of even one single citizen may feel that the verdict of the group is repugnant to the canons of truth. On such an occasion, he will take recourse to Satyagraha.<sup>44</sup>

It appears to me, however, that in the sarvodaya movement, the original Gandhian emphasis on Satyagraha has been toned down. May be, it is so because Gandhi's main fight was against an alien imperialistic system. The sarvodaya movement, on the other hand, is aimed at the comprehensive improvement of village life within the political context of free India and hence, perhaps, there is not that emphasis on Satyagraha which we find in Gandhi's life and thought.<sup>45</sup>

Sometimes it has been said that there is no place for the practice of Satyagraha in a democracy. But I personally think that it is a mistaken view. True it is that democracy adheres to the formula of peaceful change. But if, in a democracy, a citizen genuinely and sincerely feels that the cause of justice and truth is being flouted, he can take occasional recourse to Satyagraha. I do not think that Gandhi would have ever regarded satyagraha as undemocratic. He stated that for the sake of truth he was prepared alone to give battle to all the entrenched sources of power. I would go a step further and state that if Gandhi, so far as he was personally concerned, would have to choose between Satyagraha and democracy he would have championed Satyagraha. But certainly he would never have agreed to the persistent practice of Satyagraha for flimsy and vexatious issues. Satyagraha is the sword of the soldier of God and not of the anti-social fanatic. Hence it should be taken recourse to only by a person who has established his *bondyides* as a dedicated social worker. But certainly Gandhi would not have ruled out Satyagraha in independent India. I, personally, do not find much substance in the arguments of those who harp on the fact that in a democracy the conscientious citizen should only try to convert the legislature to his opinion and thus see that an undesirable piece of legislation is taken off the statute book. This

43 Jayaprakash Narayan, *Kranti Ka Adhunik Prayoga*, (in Hindi, Patna, Janata Prakashana, 1954), p. 5; Vinoba Bhave, *Sarvodaya Ke Adhara*, (Kashi, 1956), pp. 63-64; Dharmadhikari, *Sarvodaya Darshana*, pp. 242-43.

44 Vinoba Bhave, *Swarajya-Shashtra*, (in Hindi, Delhi, Sasta Sahitya Mandal, 1953), pp. 43-47. Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodan Ganga*, Vol. I, pp. 104-05.

45 According to Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodan Ganga*, Vol. IV, pp. 307-08 Satyagraha after the attainment of *Swarajya*, should be "more positive, explicit and full of strength."

certainly is a plausible and valid technic. But if the morally-oriented individual feels that the spontaneity and autonomy of the human self is jeopardized by a particular piece of legislation or administrative action, I would maintain that for the sake of vindicating truth and justice, he is entitled to his birthright of Satyagraha. The concept of political resistance has been partly or fully supported by Hotman, Calvin, Thoreau, Gandhi and Laski. If a tame liberal idealist like T. H. Green, flourishing in the firmament of the Oxford University, could champion the cause of political resistance against a despotic regime provided that, (i) all available peaceful avenues and remedies have been taken recourse to, (ii) public opinion had been made aware of the importance of the problems, and (iii) steps had been taken to prevent social disruption, I see no ground why Satyagraha should be totally banned in the context of Indian democracy. Satyagraha, I hold, is a valid technic for vindicating the plasticity, moral freedom and spiritual value of the human spirit. If the protagonists of sarvodaya contemplate the whittling away of Satyagraha, I believe they are propounding something un-Gandhian. But it must be emphatically asserted that the indiscriminate and illegitimate use of Satyagraha in a democratic set-up must not be permitted.

## 5. Scheme of Communitarian Polity

J. P. Narayan propounded a scheme for the reconstruction of Indian society and polity<sup>46</sup> which he called a communitarian system. In order to counteract the growing atomization of society and the reduction of the human being almost to an anonymous entity in a vast organisational system, new emphasis was to be put on the growth of communion among the inhabitants. In explicating this system, he drew inspirations from the writings of Salvador Madariaga,<sup>47</sup> Erich Fromm,<sup>48</sup> E. F. Schumacher and Adriano Olivetti.<sup>49</sup> In order to establish the hypothesis that some elements of the communitarian system had their foundations in the ancient Indian village communities, he quoted profusely from Sri Aurobindo's *The Spirit and Form of Indian Polity* as well as from A. S. Altekar's *State and Government in Ancient India*. From Erich Fromm, he derived the phrase "humanistic, communitarian socialism".

The communitarian system is to be marked by the humanization of science so that it can be a means for the better ordering of human society. Instead of an exaggerated emphasis on industry, there has to be set up an agro-industrial economy where equal emphasis will be placed on the growth of both agriculture and

46 J. P. Narayan, *A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity*, (Kashi, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1959); J. P. Narayan, *Swaraj for the People*, (Varanasi, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangha, 1961).

47 Salvador de Madariaga, *Democracy vs. Liberty*.

48 E. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, (1956).

49 A. Olivetti, *Community on the March*.

industry. The Panchayat Samiti consisting of a number of villages is to be the optimum community. Above that are to be the district community, the provincial community and the national community. Below the Panchayat Samiti, is to be the *Gram Sabha* of the Grama as the primary community.

The point of departure for this community is the realisation that modern parliamentary democracies or presidential democracies have failed to deliver the goods to mankind. In place of the consent of the governed, there is the enshrinement of minority governments and the claim that government is based on the majority will is almost a delusion. With a large number of demagogues propagating narrow ideologies, with vast electoral machines supported by monopoly finance, with rigid party domination and with the mounting costs of elections, the average elector has been reduced almost to a political non-entity.<sup>50</sup> Communitarianism is guided by a strong conviction that some of the devices like proportional representation which have been preached as remedies to correct the inadequacies of majority democracies are themselves inadequate and hence pleads for the resuscitation and revitalization of participant community. It is in order to strengthen the claims of the individual and to provide to him the blessings of a community life in which he can genuinely participate and realise his social and political personality that the communitarian system is advocated. In the language of Modern Systems Analysis<sup>51</sup> I may add that this communitarian system will aim at the maximization of the goal gratification of the average citizen, will sponsor a social and political structure which will be fully legitimate in the eyes of citizens, will provide them opportunities for political participation and involvement, and will make efforts for the non-violent management of tensions and conflicts prevalent or generated in society in course of meeting new challenges and bringing about needed changes.

At the economic level, in the communitarian system, co-operation and co-sharing will replace the profit motivation. There will be attempts to limit the consumption of those natural resources which cannot be easily renewed. In place of a centralized economy, there will be a self-sufficient economy where human needs will be satisfied as near the place of residence as possible and where planning will begin from the Grama or the primary community. As a counterpoise to the Marxian concept of nationalization of resources, the communitarian system will make efforts for the ownership of natural resources by the small community, as far as possible. But the latter is at one with Marxism in claiming to exalt the position of the worker. In this agro-industrial community there will be self-govern-

50 V.P. Varma, *A Study of the Mid-Term Elections in Bihar*, (Patna University, 1971), pp. 120-44 ; V.P. Varma, *A study of the Fourth General Elections in Bihar*, (Patna University, 1968), pp. 70-96.

51 Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*. Cf. the Works of Gabriel Almond.

ment in industry and the workers will fully participate in the management of all communal undertakings.

The scheme of communitarian polity is an attempt to fuse concepts and elements derived from Marxist economics, Gandhian sociology as well as some of the western writings which emphasize the growth of community sentiment. If the element of community ownership has been derived from Marxian economics, the notion that in place of class-struggle, attempts will be made for the harmonisation of social interests is derived from Gandhian sociology.

Marx rightly reacted against the evils of capitalist exploitation but in practice, the nationalization of the means of production and the association of producers have tended to exalt the supremacy of the state. With his background of the strong Prussian state, Marx, perhaps, did not visualise the danger that the state poses in a socialist economy to the citizens and the workers. He, somehow, had the fanciful notion in mind that if the proletariat would come into power, the state would manifest dictatorial tendencies only temporarily and would soon pass out of existence but this turned out to be a delusion. The supremacy of the state as contemplated by socialism in most of its forms results in a system of tyranny for the workers. Communitarian polity, on the other hand, aims to substitute the power of the state by the power of the communities at various levels. There are major sectors and spheres wherein the communities are themselves to be supreme.

However the notion that such a system marked by the growth of genuine communion and moral and spiritual collaboration will be realized in the near future, appears to me to be a kind of Utopian belief which may not materialize, to matter howsoever much we may try to improve the situation.<sup>52</sup> The romantic dream of self-sufficiency, peace, *philia* (friendship), *koinonia*, and rational harmony cannot be realized in the vast conglomerate structure of gigantic economic and political systems. Even the village communities and the republics of ancient India and the small city-states of Greece were characterized by horrible social exploitation, contempt for the suppressed and backward sections and acute economic rivalries. Hence we cannot afford to go back. We have only to reform the present set-up as best as we can.

## 6. Conclusion

The political philosophy of sarvodaya is an intellectual attempt to build a plan of political and social reconstruction on the basis of metaphysical idealism. It is based on the insights of Gandhi. It makes a healthy attempt to develop the ideas of Gandhi in the frame-

<sup>52</sup> Gurumukh Nihal Singh, "Parliamentary and Communitarian Systems of Government," *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Conference Number, 1960, (pp. 1-13), pp. 10-12.

work of independent India. Gandhi stood for the village commonwealth. He was a persistent critic of modern western democracies wedded to the cult of violence. Sarvodaya is an attempt to develop Gandhian ideas regarding decentralization and villagism. But although sarvodaya derives the concept of decentralization from Gandhi, its concept of partyless democracy is, to some extent, an original contribution to political thought although there are chances that perhaps this concept has been derived from the intellectual armoury of the Yugoslav Communist Party.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, the advocacy of the synthesis of partyless democracy and village self-government is a notable contribution from the standpoint of Indian political thought and practice.

Certainly there are common element in socialism and Sarvodaya. Both want to end the dominant regime of injustice and both aim at exalting the status of the peasants, workers and other suppressed sections of society.<sup>54</sup> But it must be emphatically stated that socialism and Sarvodaya are not synonymous. It is true that Sarvodaya represents a higher moral idealism, but socialism is more aggressive and more dynamic than Sarvodaya as a social and political movement. While socialism adheres to the notion of class-struggle, Sarvodaya believes in class harmony. While socialism wants to capture state power and use the state machine for the solution of the question of land redistribution, Sarvodaya is an adherent of the more modest technic of *dan* or gift.<sup>55</sup> It is true that Sarvodaya cannot be charged with being mostly educational or propagandist in its methodology, but certainly, it has moderated the Gandhian emphasis on Satyagraha as the universally valid weapon for the solution of political and economic questions. While Marxian socialism is a thorough adherent of the doctrine of labour theory of value, in spite of much criticisms of that view by the marginalists and the neo-classicals, Sarvodaya does not have any such defined economic theory.

In its hostility to the omnicompetence of the centralized state machine, sarvodaya reminds us of the pragmatic and pluralistic political doctrines that became fashionable after the First World War. We, in India, have had long centuries of despotic traditions. It is possible, nay probable, that under the guise of a welfare state and the socialistic pattern of society and democratic socialism, we may be heading towards the concentration of political and economic power eventually leading to dictatorship. Sarvodaya is a prophetic attempt to warn us of the dangers of political power and its monocratic concentration. In making us aware of the growing trend towards the concentration of political power and the threat to individual liberty, the leaders of the sarvodaya movement have rendered inestimable services to our infant democratic republic. India is not to be a pale reflection of England

<sup>53</sup> See also, M. N. Roy, "Politics without Party" and "From Party to Movement", *Politics, Power and Parties*, (Calcutta, Renaissance Publishers, 1960), pp. 94-113.

or America. For building a strong and developed country we need to establish traditions. Sarvodaya is the restatement of some of the noble and sublime themes of Indian culture and philosophy. In western countries we find that sociologists and political scientists have been so much dwarfed in their vision by the omnipotence of parties that they no longer believe seriously in the Lincolnian definition of democracy. Schumpeter would interpret democracy, only in a narrow way, as a choice between competing leadership. Due to the centralizing technics of monopoly capitalism and big bureaucracy, the growth of new technocratic classes and the ever-present threats of international crises the "common man" is gradually being reduced to the position of the "forgotton man". In some places, he is even afraid to cast his votes according to his conscience. The intellectuals have, more or less, submitted to the position that nothing better is possible. To escape the charge of utopianism, they are content with making only 'realistic' studies of social processes, pressure groups, leadership and mass communication, administrative regulations etc. But a systematic re-examination of the moral foundations of democratic political theory is regarded as a fruitless philosophical adventure. At such a period of intellectual staleness and inertia and an almost abject surrender to the *status quo*, the leaders and workers of sarvodaya want to concretize the Gandhian dream of Swarajya—the government of the individual over himself in all its comprehensive connotation. Even if for several decades we may not be able to practise this philosophy of Swaraj, I have been inspired by the conception of sarvodaya that democracy has to be made a genuine experiment in the art of real self-government. In the twentieth century, perhaps, this is the only political philosophy that has genuinely and sincerely clung to the formula that democracy and self-government of the vast millions have to be made real. It will not serve any worthy purpose if we are prepared to tolerate party dictatorship or state absolutism or oligarchical domination. Swarajya and democracy have to be won for every citizen of this republic. Every person in this country, and for that matter, in the entire world, is a sacred entity. I do not agree with all the detailed technics and formulas of sarvodaya political thought, but its basic and radical resolve to make the government of the individual over himself real, is a source of inspiration. Its vision is definitely exalted.

Part FIVE  
**APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX ONE

# GANDHISM AND THE POST-1948 WORLD<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi was the greatest Indian since Gautam Buddha. He realized a task which was considered almost impossible of fulfilment. Through the use of the techniques of creative love and moral resistance and the mobilization of mass resources through the application of the Constructive Programme he led four hundred millions to the path of glorious independence. He, thus, created one of the greatest convulsions in history and became an acknowledged architect of political freedom. He brought social emancipation to the vast number of the Untouchables. He championed the cause of the backward classes and suppressed sections of the society and was urgently concerned with the economic redemption of the Indian masses who were rotting in the quagmire of a decadent economy. Gandhi achieved all these things by the use of noble, non-violent and gentle techniques and persistently refused to take advantage of his opponents.

If we refer to the facts of Indian history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we find that during those days there was operating a process of decline and internecine struggle. Only by the intensification and the mobilization of widespread feeling of nationalism could Gandhi lead to victory the struggle of India's independence. The slavery of India's millions with their rich heritage was an inexplicable phenomenon both for political observers and philosophers abroad and the internal historians at home. Gandhi achieved India's independence on the foundations laid by eminent leaders like the Rani of Jhansi, Nana Saheb, Swami Dayananda, Vivekananda, Dadabhai Naoroji, Tilak, Gokhale, and a large number of other powerful and dedicated personalities. He built the edifice of freedom on the foundations of their sacrifices.

As a social and political philosopher, Gandhi emphasized the

1 Based on the lectures delivered by the author on the occasion of Gandhi centenary celebrations at—(i) the Patna University, (ii) Gandhi Museum, Patna, (iii) the Patna Lions' Club, (iv) Guru Govind Singh College (Patna City), (v) the Barbigha College, (vi) the M. S. College, Motihari, and (vii) Begusarai.

idealistic approach to politics. He fought for the rights and the dignity of the individual and eloquently championed the concept of resistance to unjustified authority. To him, the human soul is never to compromise with evil or injustice or with any concentration of irresponsible power. His advocacy of Satyagraha against the monopolization of coercion and constraint by the state and other engines of repression is a great and noble antidote to all those political philosophies which stand for militant political realism and sponsor the power of the 'prince' or the Leviathan or the determinate human superior or the totalitarian structure with the absolute command over political and economic resources.

Gandhi's impact is seen on some of the principles and notions enunciated in the Constitution of India. In the Preamble, we can see his influence on the glorification of the conception of fraternity. The abolition of untouchability as accepted in the chapter on Fundamental Rights is a significant testimony to his heritage. The Constitution emphasizes the welfare of the rural population in the Gandhian spirit. The articles dealing with the preservation of the cattle-wealth of the country, prohibition, and the promotion of cottage industries as incorporated in the chapter on Directive Principles may also be regarded as a tribute to Gandhi. The Constitution is secular in its philosophy and this again is at least partly a Gandhian heritage because, for Gandhi, all the great religions were true and the State was not to show favour to or to practice discrimination against, any religion. The Constitution emphasises the notion of liberty, equality and the rule of law. Although these concepts have been borrowed from the western theory of democracy, in the Indian context, the notion of equality, specially, has been substantiated by the teachings and the activities of the Mahatma. Gandhi was extremely solicitous for the rights of and the safeguards for the minorities and the clauses in the Constitution, guaranteeing the educational and the cultural rights of the minorities, may be regarded as an indirect testimony to the influence of Gandhian political philosophy.

For Gandhi service was supreme. *Seva* is a cardinal terms in his social and political philosophy. It is to replace the creed of sovereign political power. *Seva* asserts the heroic spirit of sacrificing oneself in the service of the community. It proceeds from the inner will of merging oneself in the supreme spirit. Thus social service is sanctified as a pathway to divine realization. Hence for independent India, Gandhi wanted a band of selfless workers. With the death of Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri and the large-scale defeats of Congress leaders in the fourth general elections, the Congress is disintegrating. Prior to his death, Gandhi wrote a political testament wherein he wanted that the Congress should be wound up and it should be replaced by a Loka Sewak Sangh. It is not known as to what were the reasons which led Gandhi to think

of the winding up of the Congress. Possibly he felt that the Congress would not be able to resist the tendency to political and economic corruption. The disintegration that has set in the Congress has once more brought to light the Gandhian and Actonian notion that power is a source of corruption.

## 2. Gandhi and the Contemporary Indian Political System

Gandhi was the most pre-eminent figure in India's struggle for Swaraj. Like other big historical phenomena, India's political liberation was also the cumulative effect of many factors. The sacrifices of the terrorists and revolutionists, the INA movement of Subhas Chandra Bose, the configuration of international forces resulting in the thorough weakening of the British empire, the moral support of Roosevelt, the pronouncement of Molotov at the San Francisco conference and a few other factors as well as the pioneering efforts of leaders and nation-makers like Dadabhai, Tilak, Gokhale, Lajpat Rai and others resulted in India's winning Swaraj. But it must be put on record that it was the will of destiny that the world-historical figure who should be given the maximum credit for India's Swaraj should be Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. There can be no two opinions on this that if any single figure has to be sought out as being most dynamically and vigorously associated with and responsible for India's Swaraj, it must be Mahatma Gandhi.

The greatest homage to Gandhi will be the consolidation of the political system of the country based on democracy. Swaraj has been attained after centuries of degradation, humiliation and suppression of the people and at the cost of great sacrifices. Hence the structure of Swaraj has to be preserved at all costs. I think that in our scheme of political and social values, the highest primacy belongs to Swaraj. Swaraj in the sense of the autonomous rule by the inhabitants of this land from Kashmir to Kerala and from Gujrat to NEFA is the most important political ideal that has to be realised today. Swaraj can be strengthened through national integration. National integration can be used in two sense. First, it means territorial integration and unification of the country. The entire stretch of land from Kashmir to Kerala and from Gujrat to NEFA has to be brought under deep and solid allegiance to the Indian political system. Any surrender of land on the borders or anywhere else to a foreign power will be a disruption of territorial consolidation. The second meaning of national integration is the emotional affiliation of the people with, and winning their allegiance to, the political system based on the Indian Constitution. The Constitution has to be maintained, preserved and protected. The achievement of emotional identification is a formidable task. It will require great sacrifices and the surrender of parochial interests at the altar of the nation. Such emotional affiliation has been sought to be deliberately brought about in the United States where also, like India, there are

problems of bringing together different ethic, racial and religious groups. In order that the vast masses of India may believe in the legitimacy of the political system it is essential that the fruits, privileges and advantages that can be conferred by the political system are equitably distributed among the inhabitants. The monopolisation of what legally and morally belongs to all by a privileged community or sect or caste is a challenge to legitimacy. Gandhi wanted decentralisation of power and the formation of village republics. This implies that he wanted political socialization of the vast masses of the country. Thereby, the rural citizens will get an opportunity to decide their own political destiny through participating in significant political decisions. Political personality can develop only when there is effective political socialization of the people through imbibing of the political values by individuals through the various voluntary associations and government agencies. It is urgently necessary to mobilise the resources and energies of the people for the great task of nation-building ahead. This cannot be done through the imposition of political directions and mandates from the top. That will amount to a repetition of the autocratic political practices that were operating in this country for centuries. Gandhi, on the other hand, wanted that people should be entrusted with the job of building their own future. The imperative task in India today is to solidify a legitimate political system based on decentralised democracy in order that Swaraj can take roots in the hearts and feelings of the people. Social Swaraj achieved through the building up of a casteless and classless, non-privileged, equalitarian society has to be supplemented with economic Swaraj.

Gandhi's greatest legacy to the nation is Swaraj. Political Swaraj has been only the first step. Gandhi was realistic enough to visualise that India's political integration would be weak and she would be exposed to foreign invaders unless political Swaraj was supplemented with economic Swaraj, social Swaraj and moral Swaraj. He wanted the consolidation of a social and political system in this country which will claim the moral and emotional allegiance and loyalty of all citizens. Throughout India's history the vast masses have been reduced to being the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. Their standard of life has to be raised. Additional income has to be put into their pockets. They have to be made participants in its political system and dynamic sharers in India's democracy.

### **3. Non-Violence and Satyagraha**

Satyagraha is a permanent medium of voicing forth protest against injustice. It does not imply that it can be used only when the adversary is civilized and believes in liberal values and is amenable to the influence of spiritual and moral forces. Satyagraha is based on the internalization of some of important moral norms and claims universal applicability. It is a far better alternative than

abject surrender. It is also a vindication of the organised power of discipline. It shows that power does not reside only in tanks and guns. It demonstrates that real power lies in discipline and organisation. At any rate, the loss of life is much less in Satyagraha than in open warfare. Satyagraha may be tried on a wider scale even for the sake of experiment. We can now only imagine the extent to which Gandhi's technique of Satyagraha would have been relevant to the solution of the crisis in Czechoslovakia.

Satyagraha is absolutely and completely removed from any association with violence. It is true that once a while we hear of lynching in U.S.A., or even in India. When we hear of violence meted out to a Harijan, our moral sense rises in revolt. Gandhi, however, would not sanction violence by people even for preventing, say, the lynching of a person by a mob. He would urge that the people who believe in Satyagraha should lay down their lives in protecting the victims rather than themselves take resort to violence to protect the victims. Thus in the process of protecting the victims by non-violence, the votaries of Satyagraha should be ready to accept self-immolation. Nor is organised anger sanctioned in the Gandhian scheme either in theory or practice. According to the Gandhian theories, anger and violence are ruled out. I am not saying that anger has no place in politics. I am only stating that according to the Gandhian theory even anger is to be controlled and then transmuted into a creative force. Although Dr. Lohia had asserted his theoretical commitment to non-violence, his speeches were not free from preaching hatred against the opponents. Hence I do not regard Dr. Lohia as the genuine exponent of Gandhian Satyagraha.

Non-cooperation, which is one of the important technics of Satyagraha, is based on the cultivation of internal and external discipline. Some of the leaders of the Indian independence movement, like Tilak, had doubts about the capacity of the people to resort to non-cooperation. Even after the death of Tilak, some of the Maharashtra leaders like Jaykar and Kelkar were opposed to non-cooperation. They had doubts about the capacity of the people to remain non-violent in case of provocation. Satyagraha demands the cultivation of the power of organised moral resistance to all kinds of social, economic and political evils. Only a person who is disciplined through a constant practice of the moral virtues can be in a position to offer Satyagraha. It must be emphasised that the practice of what Gandhi calls *Ekadasha Mahavrata* (the eleven great vows) is the foundation of the Gandhian Satyagraha. During the Non-cooperation movement, Gandhi advised the various components of society to disassociate themselves from institutions like law-courts, schools and colleges and other places where the governmental activities were carried on. Through these acts of non-cooperation, he wanted to paralyse the engines of a foreign imperialism but in no sense was he

inviting the people to indulge in acts of indiscipline or promote anarchist trends.

Several Communist critics as well as M. N. Roy have levelled the charge that by emphasising non-violence as the proper technic for the solution of social, economic and political problems, Gandhi was trying to stifle all legitimate ways of redressing wrongs. The leftist critics of Gandhism have gone to the extent of charging non-violence with being a camouflage or hypocritical window-dressing for curbing the possible, if not inevitable, direction of the political struggle against the British into a struggle of the oppressed sections of Indian humanity against the exploiters like the capitalists, the landlords, the zamindars and other social and feudal elements who somehow tried to perpetuate their regime of unfettered exploitation. It must be emphasised at this place that Gandhi was against any kind of social, political or economic wrong. He was perpetually unreconciled to any kind of oppression of the weaker sections. It would be absolutely wrong to think that he would have yielded to social and economic injustice in any shape. It must also be mentioned that even the apologists of violence are not getting skeptical of violence being the sole effective antidote against social injustices.

Gandhi was a prophet of absolute non-violence and he hoped that eventually India would be able to do without an army. In the context of the threats to Indian borders, the Indian Government has rightly refused to accept the Gandhian dictum. In the context of today's world, it is not possible for India either to embark upon unilateral disarmament or to slacken the pace of military preparedness. The Chinese attack on India, in 1962, and the Pakistani attack supported by American tanks and jets, in 1965, have led the proponents of Gandhian political philosophy to a severe heart-searching. Are we to capitulate before barbaric and fanatical invaders, or are we to practise mass Satyagraha against them by laying down our lives in silent suffering but not raising a finger against the criminal conspirators against our liberty ? It is possible to hold that as a political realist, Gandhi would have definitely said that if India's independence cannot be retained by non-violence, it had to be preserved by violence. Capitulation to evil and acquiescence in the destruction of liberty would have been absolutely unpalatable to him. Just as he supported the use of the Indian army in Kashmir, so also he would have justified the policy of Nehru and Shastri and their associates against China and Pakistan respectively.

Swaraj has been achieved after untold sufferings, misery and privation. Thousands of peoples have laid down their lives in different ways for the political emancipation of India. This Swaraj must be saved. Swaraj was immensely dear to Gandhi's heart. He would not have supported any weakness in the defence of Swaraj. He would have very much liked that Swaraj should be preserved by mobilisation of organised non-violent strength. If there were a threat to the

independence of the country, he would have wanted millions to lay down their lives gallantly and gladly. But if that kind of heroic power of resistance were not available in the country, then Gandhi would not have tolerated abject submission or surrender before the aggressors. To him, any surrender when there was a threat to Swaraj would have been intolerable. The true testament of Gandhi, so far as Swaraj is concerned, would have been that it must be preserved even by armed resistance, if the country does not have the power and the capacity to defend itself with fearless non-violence. Absolute non-violence would be meant only for him because for him (Gandhi) it was a matter of faith. For the country and the Congress, non-violence was a matter of policy. If Indians can preserve Swaraj by heroic non-violent resistance that spectacle would have pleased Gandhi the most, but if this first and best alternative is not available, the second best remedy is to preserve Swaraj by genuine recourse to armed violence. The third alternative of weakness and surrender is something which would have been absolutely unpalatable to Gandhi. In the context of preserving India's political Swaraj, I do not think that it will be un-Gandhian to manufacture atomic weapons. Gandhi always stood for non-violence of the brave. He would be the happiest person if India's Swaraj can be preserved by the non-violence of the brave, but if that much of moral fearlessness is not avoidable then it is imperative to build up our strength according to the second alternative which is the fearless pursuit of violence. Gandhi would have absolutely ruled out the third alternative which is the non-violence of the coward and the weaklings. He never failed to chide those people who would be passive spectators when anti-social elements would try to molest their womenfolk. Gandhi would have liked such people to defend the honour of women by violence if they did not have the ideal moral courage to lay down their lives and become martyrs in protecting womenfolk through non-violence of the brave. It has been amply demonstrated that we do not have such people in the country who, on a mass scale, can lay down their lives non-violently in the defence of the borders and preserve the territorial integrity of the nation. That highest ideal being incapable of realisation in the present situation, the second alternative may be taken recourse to and that is the defence of the country through violence. Gandhi would have absolutely refused to sanction a policy which results in national humiliation or in confiscation of the national territory or in any way threatens political consolidation. He was absolutely opposed to a policy of cowardice, passivity and resignation before the mighty. Hence the political independence of the country must be preserved and for this the manufacture of atomic weapons is imperatively needed as a deterrent to others and not for offence.

But as an ultimate ideal for mankind non-violence is still to be stressed. It will not be wise to ridicule Gandhism if the Indian Government and the people have failed to abide by his teachings. The period, since man has been evolving from his animal ancestry,

has not been long, and four to five lakhs of years have not been sufficient to tame the animal instincts of man. It may be hoped that with further evolution man will be able to arrive at a situation when there will be greater resort to the ideal of non-violence.

#### **4. Gandhian Satyagraha and Direct Action in Contemporary Indian Politics**

Gandhi is famous in the history and the politics of the world as a prophet of Satyagraha, but the Gandhian Satyagraha may be launched only by people imbued with the goodwill, who care for the common good, and who attempt to resist unjustified laws, promulgations and ordinances of the government, solely dictated by their "inner conscience" (*antaratman*). Satyagraha, as conceived by Gandhi, is, never an invitation to the disruption of society. But in India today we find that all types of coercive techniques are being practised and somehow or other they are justified as if they were in the line of Satyagraha.

Today we find the resort to large-scale hunger-strikes for the implementation of economic demands. But although there is an element of coercion in hunger-strokes, I will not call them un-Gandhian. The hunger-striker only punishes himself. He does not injure the supposed adversary. Hunger-strokes have been resorted to in liberation movements in other parts of the world also.

A second technique, which is an extreme radicalization of hunger-strike, and which is getting favour today is the threat of beginning fasts unto death. It is very true that in 1932, Gandhi undertook a fast unto death to get the Communal Award withdrawn or suitably amended. But today this threat has become very common. Sometimes fasts unto death are undertaken by irresponsible fanatics against some of whom there was the rumour current that secretly they had been taking food. If fasts unto death are undertaken by corrupt people, I will consider them un-Gandhian.

The third technique falsely allied to the Gandhian Satyagraha is the technique of self-immolation (*Atmadaha*). Possibly, this technique has gained favour by the practice of Buddhist monks in Indonesia, but this was dramatized in Indian politics in 1966 by the proposed self-immolation of Fateh Singh and his Akali associates. The technique of *Atmadaha* is definitely coercive and is definitely un-Gandhian because it wants to solve political problems not on the level of reason but by the capitalization of mass emotion, frenzy and violent fury.

After the last elections, a fourth technique of mass action is becoming fashionable and that is *Gherao*. This definitely contains the element of violence and is opposed both to the spirit of democracy and to the political philosophy of Gandhi. There is no doubt that the theory and practice of Satyagraha have been much perverted and misused in modern India. The pressuriz-

ing techniques adopted by the people who resort to *Gherao* have no place in Gandhian thought and practice. I certainly will not blame Gandhi for the excesses committed by the people who swear by *Gherao*. It will be unwise to blame Gandhism for its recent perverse interpretation.

The technique of *Dharana*, on the other hand, I will consider Gandhian, because in *Dharana*, the person, engaged in the pursuit of that technique, undergoes personal difficulties and sufferings, but there is no attempt at the coercion of the functionary against whose policies, *Dharana* is being practised.

Another technique of direct action which can never be considered to have the remotest connection with Gandhism, is the organisation of demonstrations and processions by irresponsible leaders in which the participants shout provocative slogans and hurl abuses against some target of their hatred and wrath.

Still another un-Gandhian technique of direct action was the encirclement of Parliament which is said to have been resorted to by the *Sadhus* to press their demand for legal ban on cow-slaughter on November 7, 1966, in Delhi. A peaceful assembly of people before the Parliament is Gandhian and is democratic, but any attempt to encircle the Parliament and to terrorize the inmates by the sheer force of organised numbers and provocative slogans is un-Gandhian.

I do consider that the defection of legislators chosen on the ticket of one political party to another is morally and politically a fraud but I do not consider it illegal. But although I consider it undemocratic, I am not prepared to concede that the electors have a right to put physical pressure on a legislator who practises defection. The civic and fundamental rights enjoyed by other citizens are also the privileges of legislators and no elector has a right to subject the person of a legislator to danger or assault. Here I may also add that a large-scale assembly of people before the houses of legislature, shouting slogans against a possible defector is opposed to the Gandhian spirit.

Even in the greatest emergencies, crises and times of trouble and communal riots, Gandhi stood for general civility and decency. He approved of the non-violent martyrdom of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, in Kanpur, in 1931. After the death of Gandhi, it was hoped that his martyrdom would corroborate the cause of non-violence in Indian politics, but we find that in the country as a whole not only criminal violence has increased but political violence is on the march. Gandhi was opposed to all types of violence as a method for the settlement of disputes. He would have been mortally shocked to hear about the violent liquidation of political opponents in independent India. When I contemplate the rising tempo of violence in the social and political life of the country, I am compelled to think that the show of non-violence which India maintained, more or less,

during the years of British imperial regime emerged from helplessness and weakness. Now when the British masters have gone, the suppressed layers of violence, criminality and lustful slaughter which were slumbering in the racial unconscious have plainly come to the forefront, and violence appears to have become the creed of a substantial section of the politically conscious population. Gandhi regarded non-violence as a norm of transcendent importance and it would not be an exaggeration to say that the rising trend of violence is not only a threat to democracy but will completely neutralize the moral and spiritual heritage of India which Gandhi was so anxious to safeguard.

It is no doubt true that once the energies of a group of people are unleashed, in the absence of proper canalisation, they have the tendency to get deflected in wrong channels. It is true that during recent years there have been cases of such misdirection of both individual and social energy but so far as Gandhism itself is concerned, it cannot be blamed for this excess. It is very true that in post-independence India, some sections of political workers as well as students have perverted the Gandhian theories and practices and have indulged in anti-social acts and have also resorted to indiscipline, sabotage, destruction of national property and violence. But for these activities one cannot blame Gandhi or his theory. No body can blame Gandhi for not having foreseen that if students are encouraged in disassociating themselves from educational institutions, run or subsidized by the British imperial power, the trend would, later on, develop of their disassociating themselves from national institutions also if even their petty and flimsy grievances were not redressed. If such remote calculations were to be made then, in that case, nothing would have been started. Liberty implies the capacity to make wrongs and to correct these wrongs after they are detected.

### **5. Gandhism and Contemporary Indian Economics**

Since 1951, India has embarked upon vast schemes for the economic growth and development of the country. To the extent that the Plans emphasize the expansion of agrarian productivity and other improvements in the field of agriculture, they may be supposed to breathe a Gandhian spirit. Gandhi was sick at the rampant misery of the Indian agricultural section and the abolition of land revenue that is being brought about in some states of the Indian Union may be regarded as a measure that would have won the appreciation of the Mahatma. Gandhi was in favour of the nationalization of the key-industries. In India, nationalization has been practiced in certain areas of transport, but the Indian Government under Nehru accepted that instead of the nationalization of old industrial plants it is better to set up new State plants with superior technology, in different fields. This technic may also be said to be in the Gandhian line, because Gandhi would have appreciated

that the evils of monopoly and private accumulation of wealth should be redeemed by the extension of the public sector. But Gandhi was a great social and economic realist and would have refused to be satisfied with mere statistical figures and percentages. He would have been aghast at the growing industrial and monopolistic concentrations. Although in some fields the poorer people and the backward classes have got new job-openings, nevertheless, the concentration of wealth is a pre-eminent trend of India's economic life since 1951.

Gandhi was in favour of family planning but for this he advocated Brahmacharya or voluntary self-restriction. The modern methods of family planning would not have met with his approval.

Gandhi in his philosophy of civilization emphasises the notions of simplicity, self-abnegation and the curtailment of complexities. In the country today, on the other hand, we find the increasing acceptance of western economic values. The country is heading towards urbanization, westernization and large-scale mechanisation. It is difficult to find the soul of Gandhi in the big mansions that are being raised in New Delhi. Delhi is trying to become an imitation of other megalopolitan centres of the West. In other words, Indian planning aims at a thorough technological rationalization and thorough mechanisation. Today India is embarking upon a course of social and economic existence which may be realistic on its own assumptions of the expansion of productivity and for catering to the increase of the standard of living, but it must be accepted that this is not what Gandhi advocated.

Gandhism has to be restressed in the context of several issues that have become significant in post-independence India. In the areas where panchayats have been set up and democratic decentralization schemes have been implemented there have been revealed great social contradictions. Economic tensions are increasing in the villages. Through capturing positions and power in the village panchayats, rural capitalists and wealthy rural landlords have come to ascendancy. This situation is a negation of Gandhi's dream of village republics.

Gandhi felt that Swaraj should not be confined to the urban areas. The whole of India did not lie in Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay or Madras. The vast rural countryside has to be made a genuine participant in the decision-making processes. It is true that due to some of the recent economic measures some rural farmers have expanded their income. But the fruits of the green revolution and mechanization of agriculture have resulted in the making of some of the rural elements into agricultural capitalists. Gandhi must have been shocked at such developments. His criterion for the validation and justification of any political system was the triumph of the most suppressed human being. He repeated the Biblical phrase used by

Ruskin—"Unto this last". This means that the lowest, the lowliest and the most suppressed sections of Indian society have to be strengthened to become the makers of their political and economic destiny. If their lot was not bettered, Swaraj would amount to only a change of white masters by black masters who sometimes may become even greater monsters than foreign imperialists. Gandhi always used to measure things by the satisfaction they would give to the last man, that is, the most humiliated, the ill-educated, poor peasants and labourers of the country. He would measure Swaraj not by the new residential colonies that have been set up in the metropolitan areas and in the big towns to cater to the comforts of the wealthy sections, nor would he be satisfied with the large number of government buildings and administrative establishments that have been raised in the process of actualizing a planned economy. His centre of attraction was the mud hut or the thatched roof of the poor industrial labourers and the agricultural workers. Unless they got some relief, Gandhi would always consider Swaraj to be inadequate. He would refuse to be deluded by the grandeur that one notices in the fashionable areas of Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay so long as there are lakhs of people sleeping on the footpaths in those same big cities. Gandhi would continue the non-violent crusade for the building up of a more satisfied society. There is no doubt that there is a great element of realism in Gandhian economic thought. The advance of down-trodden sections is something which needs additional emphasis in the context of republican and socialist India.

Gandhi was terribly pained to find the specter of unemployment in the country. Through his doctrines of equal distribution, he wanted to bring about revolutionary social and economic changes. If there are no feudal overlords, if the capitalists transform themselves into trustees of the wealth which they possess, and if all people in the professional, managerial and supervisory fields, as well as the workers who minister to menial and manipulative tasks, are paid at the same rate, it is clear that there will be ushered in a system of thorough equality. The Gandhian doctrine of equal wages to all is far more revolutionary than the practices operating in the Communist and the socialist systems today. The latter have entrenched in power a new class—the class of party-men and bureaucrats and the technical managers. In the Gandhian system there is no desire to replace one class of privileged section by another similarly fortified.

A dilemma that has been revealed in modern times is how to reconcile Gandhi's call for simplicity with the desire to build an industrial and technological economy. Simplicity demands deliberate reduction of wants. But if the standard of living of the people has to be raised, that requires mechanization and industrialization on a vast scale. If, however, industrialisation is taken recourse to, on a large scale, that will mean the reproduction of the social and moral evils that have been seen in the industrialized western countries.

Gandhi believed in equal payment to scavengers, lawyers and doctors. But that was the ultimate ideal and it was to be practised in Ramrajya. In the first stage or the stage of Swaraj, Gandhi should sanction payment according to the needs and requirements, but he will not sanction multiplication of unnecessary needs. He would be opposed to the view of the planners who want to increase the demands of the people so that produced goods can be purchased. He believed in simplicity and according to his criterion no man was to amass goods for himself. Unnecessary accumulation is a sin. If this aspect of Gandhian thought is adhered to in personal and social life, then a great amount of social malady can be remedied.

With the passage of years, Gandhi began to add radical dimensions to his economic thought. It can be hoped that if he were alive after independence, he certainly would have sanctioned organised Satyagraha for the eradication of the evils of capitalism and landlordism. His heart was deeply anguished to see the abject poverty of the lower sections of the Indian humanity, and he would not have rested content with merely preaching sermons against exploitation. He emphasised class harmony and reconciliation of class interests at a time when the main fight was against foreign imperialism. After Swaraj was achieved, Gandhi must have, if he were alive, diverted his energies to supplement political Swaraj with the real and genuine Swaraj of the masses in the economic field. I am sure, he would have made no concessions to the exploitationist technics of the capitalists and zamindars.

Several individuals and groups in independent India have hailed Mahatma Gandhi as the father of the nation, but it appears that his economic teachings are generally reserved as themes for sermonizing on January 26, January 30, August 15 and October 2, every year. The economic philosophy and economic policy of the country are mostly based on the western concepts of industrialization, large-scale planning, urbanization and mechanization. Thus what survives of Gandhian economics today in the country belongs to the categories of things like bullock-carts, mustard oil, Khadi and cowsheds. I myself am not for any rigid dogmatic attachment to any economic theory. The thing of primary concern is people's welfare. Are the 'mute millions' economically better than they were under the British rule? On paper and in statistical charts the condition of the people might have improved. But the grim havoc that is witnessed today due to the exorbitant rise in the price of food-stuffs and other essential commodities has its own story to tell. It is no exaggeration to say that the economic actions in the last twenty-three years have failed to enthuse the masses and have ignored the Gandhian dream of putting more lustre in the eyes and more 'paises' in the pockets of the semi-starving masses of India. Since 1942 the terrific rise in prices has broken the backs of some of the already crippled landless labourers and the poorer section.

Different parties blame different culprits. Some ascribe the failure on the economic front to the defects of the administrative bureaucracy ; some would regard the immediate economic penury as the necessary price for industrialization and would say that without hardships you cannot have Bhakra Nangal, Durgapur and Mokameh Bridge ; while some others would put the blame on nature with its havoc of floods or the absence of rains ; while still others would be eloquent against the designs of our bad neighbours. The ever-increasing threats to the Indian borders do demand further sacrifices. Gandhi bitterly denounced the heavy expenditure on the army incurred by the British, but today to safeguard our frontiers increasing and mounting expenditure on the defence forces is an imperative necessity.

Whatsoever be the order of priority among the factors to blame for the economic malady of the country, there is no denial that the masses are not better off. Gandhi would have been shocked to see this scene of rampant misery and all-round penury of more than three-fourths of the population. He would have refused to be misled by the mounting figures of national and state budget as signs of prosperity.

In order to remedy the evil, it is essential to bear in mind Gandhi's stress on simplicity and revitalization of village economy. Extravagance has to be avoided and the craze for big buildings has to go. They look completely incongruous in the context of the country's poverty. There is a cry that corruption is growing. Hence the Gandhian stress on simplicity has to be used as an antidote. There is no use of imitating America and Russia. Gandhi always harped on the intensive development of the villages which are, regrettably, being progressively turned into suburbs. The restoration of the sanctity of the village countryside is essential if the moral evils of industrialism and urbanization are to be avoided. I am not against modernization, but I see wisdom in cutting our cloth according to the resources at hand. Hence I think that more attention should be paid to the Gandhian scheme of Constructive Programme for the solidification of rural economy.

## **6. Gandhism and Contemporary Public Administration**

Gandhi regarded the state as a concentration of violence and hence he pleaded for administrative decentralization and the progressive use of the techniques of non-violence in the political and administrative life of the country. But today we find that planning and the demands of rationalization and efficiency are increasing the trend towards centralization. Gandhi was in favour of village republics. It is very true that the movement for statutory Panchayats and the new schemes of Democratic Decentralization may be said to be amplifications of the Gandhian philosophy but even in these small sectors where grass-roots democracy is being practised to a limited extent, the results are not satisfactory, because in these areas there is large-scale corruption and also the domination of feudal elements and a few

organised caste-leaders. It will be difficult to maintain that the experiments with Panchayats or the Panchayat Samitis or the Zila Parishads have resulted in the triumph of the spontaneous will of the poor people for which Gandhi's soul clamoured. When I look at the perversions and corruptions that are rampant in the operation of the Panchayats and when I contemplate the mounting inequality in the countryside where by taking advantage of some of the new sources of the acquisition of wealth, the old exploiters of the country have once again become the masters of economic power, I shudder and feel that possibly the days of Rousseau's general will and Gandhi's republic of six lakhs of Indian villages have passed for ever, and my faith in the eventual triumph of the Gandhian political philosophy in the sense that every man and specially the poor people will become the real sovereign over their destiny, is shattered. Gandhi hoped that ultimately there will be the triumph of the moral sovereignty of the people and there will be the dawn of a perfect society based on moral and spiritual enlightenment as visualised in the concept of Ramrajya. But, in practice, I find that India is heading towards monopoly, towards a renewed feudalism, towards elitism, towards administrative oligarchies and towards the corruption of the areas of democratic planning and decision-making, and thus instead of a regime of simplicity and individual freedom we are heading towards a new Leviathan of concentration of power.<sup>2</sup>

## 7. Gandhism and International Politics

In the context of world politics today we find that atomic and hydrogen bombs are being stock-piled very rapidly. China has entered the nuclear race. The war that is being carried on in Vietnam is resulting in the repudiation of all sacred notions of freedom and dignity. The war between the Arabs and the Israelis has demonstrated that the Jews with their superior power of organised violence could put the Arabs to shame. The Secretary Generals of the United Nations have been trying to follow the policy of conciliation and mediation and arbitration but in the Middle East, in Vietnam, in Bangladesh, and in Africa, violence is the rule of the hour. The Negro leader, Dr. Luther King, was a believer in the Gandhian philosophy and he, sometimes, also organised peaceful marches in the Gandhian way but even in the United States of America we have seen a wave of violence for the cultivation of equality and dignity in racial relations. Gandhi had hoped that ultimately his philosophy of non-violence would prevail in the world. It is true that some outstanding political disputes of the world have been solved by democratic methods. It is also true that a few of the greatest powers have come to some kind of understanding and mutual adjustments. But in spite of these adjustments and settlements, it is difficult not to acknowledge that all

<sup>2</sup> V. P. Varma, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, (Agra, Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, 1967), 3rd ed., pp. 564-85.

nation-state are ready to embark upon violence, the moment what they consider as vital to their self-interest, is at stake. So, peaceful techniques and democratic methods, it appears, are only intermediate stages. The final settlement of disputes by war has never been renounced, in spite of the preachings of the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the UNESCO. So it is very difficult to visualize that in the coming decades there is going to be any real progress towards the acceptance of non-violence in international politics. We could have said that the world is progressing towards Gandhism only if there would have been an increase in the renunciation of violence even where vital interests were at stake.

### 8. Conclusion

But in spite of the rather dismal picture that we get about the advance in the pursuit of Gandhian political philosophy and techniques in the contemporary world, I am not a pessimist. In Gandhi himself there was an element of complete optimism. What impresses me in the Gandhian political philosophy is its stress on the acceptance of noble means for the realisation of morally valid ends. It is not only a sound ethical maxim but it has also an element of practical realism. To me, this principle appears as a form of the Buddhist emphasis on *Samyak Karmanta*. Both the principles only state in a moral way the self-evident fact that one reaps what one sows.

Another element that impresses me in Gandhi's political philosophy is the emphasis on the physical health of the citizens. Like Plato and Aristotle, Gandhi wants his citizens to be physically hardy and sturdy, who can walk long distances and can endure the buffets and ravages of Nature. It was in order to emphasize the necessity of physical health that Gandhi glorified manual labour. He brought to focus the concept of bread labour as advocated by Bondareff and Tolstoy. I think that a great psychological revolution can be brought about in the world and specially in India if all people do some kind of physical labour. It will reduce, to a considerable extent, the distinction between the elite and the masses.

Another concept that has impressed me in the Gandhian political philosophy is its emphasis on simplicity. Accumulation always leads to the exploitation of the people and the concentration of surplus is an invitation to misery. Like Socrates and like Christ, Gandhi also believed in a moral solution of economic problems. If we emphasise simplicity in our life and in our economic organisation, then the evils of capitalism as well as of State socialism can be substantially ended. The concept of accumulation necessarily contains the germs of war. The physical and economic resources of the earth are limited. Population is increasing at an accelerated rate. Hence an armed struggle for the possession of resources is bound to come if voluntary restraint is not practised.

## APPENDIX TWO

### RECENT LITERATURE IN GANDHIOLOGY

#### [ *Review Article<sup>1</sup>* ]

Although the first significant book on the life and ideas of Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi entitled *M. K. Gandhi : An Indian Patriot in South Africa*, was published in 1909 (a biography by Rev. Doke),<sup>2</sup> it is only since 1920 that a vast literature is growing round the activities and thoughts of the great leader. After his tragic martyrdom which deeply touched the feelings and emotions of mankind, a reinforced and awakened interest has been shown in the world-moving consequences and implications of the momentous ideas embodied in the personality of Gandhi.

The history of Gandhiological<sup>3</sup> literature can be divided into three phases. The first phase begins about 1920. In this phase interest was mainly concentrated on the holy life of the Mahatma. In this period eulogistic books were written comparing the Mahatma to Buddha, Jesus Christ, St. Paul and St. Francis. Perhaps, the greatest production of this period is Romain Rolland's *Mahatma Gandhi*.<sup>4</sup> Rene Fullop-Miller wrote his *Lenin and Gandhi* wherein he interpreted these two great leaders (Lenin and Gandhi) as symbols of protest against western civilization. In this period some other works also appeared noting the eccentricities of Gandhi's life. The publication of Gandhi's *Autobiography or My Experience with Truth* provided interesting and profound materials for the psychological study of his personality. The *Autobiography* brings to light the emotional and mental conflicts of Gandhi and is more revealing than Tolstoy's *Confessions* although not as shockingly revealing as Rousseau's *Confessions*. It is comparable to Shraddhananda's *Kalyana Marga Ka Pathika*.

1 Slightly revised form of the author's article published in the *Diogenes*, No. 29, (UNESCO publication, March 1960, Paris & Chicago).

2 Joseph J. Doke : *M. K. Gandhi : An Indian Patriot in South Africa*.

3 I make a distinction between *Gandhiology* and *Gandhism*. *Gandhism* is a term of limited import and refers to the ideas of Gandhi. *Gandhiology*, on the other hand, will cover every kind of intellectual material about Gandhi. It will include a study of his life as well as his ideas. A similar distinction has been made between *Buddhology* and *Buddhism* or between *Marxology* and *Marxism*.

4 Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi : The Man Who Became One With the Universal Being* (1924). Miss Madeline Slade became a spiritual disciple of Gandhi after having read this volume.

In the second phase of Gandhiological literature, interest was mainly concentrated on the political ideas of Gandhi. The application of the perennially venerated concepts of truth and non-violence to politics by Gandhi, appeared fascinating. C. F. Andrews' *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas* is a significant production of this period. The tributes offered to Mahatma Gandhi on his seventieth birthday and collected in Radhakrishnan's (edited) *Mahatma Gandhi* is an important study of the political ideas and techniques of Gandhi. This phase begins about 1930.

The third phase begins about 1940. In this period interest is also focused on the economic philosophy of Gandhi. The Indian national movement had, by now, assumed a strong foundation and had necessarily become keener in its search for the solutions of the pressing economic problems. This necessarily made imperative the clarification of Gandhi's ideas on the dominant economic issues.

This threefold periodization of Gandhiological literature that I have attempted is not something absolute. It is a generalized assessment for the purpose of pointing out the relative emphasis. This statement has to be taken into consideration along with one important point in mind. Once a phase has begun, it continues. It does not stop with the beginning of the succeeding phase. For example, after the death of Gandhi the biographical side of Gandhiological literature has received intensive attention. D. G. Tendulkar has brought out eight volumes of *Mahatma* in over four thousand pages. But these volumes instead of being finished artistic pieces are only the storehouse of materials for a magnificent future biography. They suffer from the historical point of view and are not meticulous about specificity and exactness of dates. Exact dates of concrete events are extremely important from the standpoint of historical research. Other leaders and persons associated with Gandhi are bringing out volumes containing their reminiscences. Gandhi's hitherto unpublished letters to Miss Slade, Sardar Patel and others are also being collected and gradually published.

Among the volumes selected here for review, the two volumes by Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi : The Last Phase*<sup>5</sup>, are biographical. Gregg's book *The Power of Non-violence* pertains to the field of political theory and the volumes edited by Kher and Kumarappa bring out significant selections from Gandhi's writings in the field of sociology and economics. This would indicate that the phases of Gandhiological literature, once begun, continue although the relative emphasis may shift in some other directions.

Pyarelal's two volumes are written in a forceful and lucid style. The author has a mastery of English prose and a rich vocabulary.

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<sup>5</sup> *Mahatma Gandhi : The Last Phase*, in two volumes, pp. 750 (Vol. I) & 887 (Vol. II). By Pyarelal. Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad. (Vol. I published in 1956 and Vol. II published in 1958).

The objectivity and the immense collection of facts in these volumes place him in the category of the great biographers of the world.

These two volumes cast almost contrary impressions of the sublime and the pathetic on the reader's mind. They reveal the great stature of Gandhi's prophetic personality. The absolute sincerity with which Gandhi attempted to handle the raging and bitter communal situation in 1946-47 is moving. His devotion to truth and non-violence was immense. His spirit of self-immolation is revealed in his lonely marches in Noakhali in Bengal (Vol. I, Chapter XIX, pp. 487-508 : "The Bare-Footed Pilgrim") and in his tour of the riot-affected areas of Bihar. The majestic faith of Gandhi in the divine spirit is revealed in ever brighter colours. But the last days of Gandhi also reveal the pathetic aspects of the forlorn prophet (Vol. II, p. 649). Either because of the possible persistent eruption in his mind of the dialectics associated with the conceptions of detachment (*Anasakti*) and disinterestendness (*Vairagya*) taught in the *Bhagavadgita* or because of physical frailty brought about by advancing age, Gandhi sometimes loses the grip over the fluctuating dynamics of the political scene. In Vol. II, between pp. 288-89, there is an illustration underneath which there is quoted a line from Gandhi : "Who listens to me today ?" These twofold currents of the exalted and sublime dimensions of a God-intoxicated prophetic personality and the beginning of the process of either voluntary or necessitated slow decline of his hold on the actual concrete processes of the political decision-making during the crucial years 1946 to 1948, are the important trends of this biography.

The first volume of Pyarelal contains a chapter (Chapter XXIII, pp. 569-605) on Brahmacharya or Gandhi's concept of continence or self-restraint. The experiment that Gandhi is indicated as carrying on for testing his control of sensual passions is peculiar. The admirers and believers will hail it as one of the supremest tests of self-control by Gandhi while the research student imbued with the 'devastating' ideas of psychology and psycho-analysis will find in it some interesting material for his 'case study'.

The quotation from Gandhi reproduced on p. 715 of the second volume will conclusively refute the insinuation prevalent in some circles that the fast undertaken by Gandhi in January, 1948, was indirectly aimed against the policy of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the then Home Minister of the Indian Government.

Pyarelal's two volumes contain fifty-three chapters. The historian of this period would be more facilitated in the persual of this book if each chapter in its sub-title also contained the indication of the period (*i.e.*, number of months and days) with which it deals. In the choice of the titles of the chapters, Pyarelal has chosen to be poetic and sentimental rather than factual and concrete. For the historian who may want to consult these big tomes on specific points

such chapter-headings as "Bitter and Sweet", "The Slow Leaven", "Blood and Tears", or "Triumph and Tragedy" contain no easy clue to what they are expected to contain.

The two volumes of Pyarelal constitute a welcome and immensely significant addition to the literature of Gandhiology. They are marked by an extensive collection of facts and details as well as by their systematic handling. The profound veneration of the author for Gandhi adds a sweet note to this whole narrative of over fifteen hundred pages.

The three volumes of *Economic and Industrial Life and Relations*, edited by V. B. Kher<sup>6</sup>, reveal the integral approach of Gandhi towards economics. He did not view economic problems as isolated departments of man's activity. To him a moral, simple and devout life was central and hence along with Ruskin and Tolstoy, he sponsored a psychological and ethical approach to economics. He absolutely stuck to the cardinal concepts of truth, non-violence, and non-accumulation and wanted to make them the criteria for the choice of economic priorities and the performance and appraisal of economic action. There is, however, also a pronounced realism in Gandhi's economic ideas. He regarded the villages as the centre of Indian economic organisation. His opposition to large-scale industrialization, capitalism, urbanization and the craze for labour-saving devices is not the outburst of a patriarchal agrarian reaction but is rooted in the keen perception that the only way to harness the huge Indian man-power characterized by an accelerated rate of the growth of population and the slender economic resources of the country was to strengthen cottage industries and Khadi. Gandhi's economic radicalism is also brought out in these volumes in his championship of the concept of equality of wages for the lawyer, the doctor and the scavenger. He is deeply and sorrowfully concerned with the growth of mounting unemployment. He was keen on mitigating the evils of a growingly disproportionate and hierarchical economic structure and hence the old moral concept of trusteeship receives an enlarged application and Gandhi is said to have sponsored the idea of even the state coming in the picture in case there is no voluntary acceptance of the concept of trusteeship (Vol. I, pp. 125-26). The first volume also contains an informative and well-arranged summary of Gandhi's economic ideas. The three volumes of *Economic and Industrial Life and Relations* show a painstaking and judicious selection of papers, articles and notes and will serve as a mine of rich materials for the student of Gandhian sociology and economics.

<sup>6</sup> *Economic and Industrial Life and Relations*. In three Volumes, pp. CXII & 156 (Vol. I), p. 347 (Vol. II), p. 250 (Vol. III), by M. K. Gandhi. Compiled and edited by V. B. Kher. Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1957.

The title *Towards Non-Violent Socialism* of the book edited by Bharatan Kumarappa<sup>7</sup> may give a slightly false perspective to Gandhi's economic ideas. Both socialism and Gandhism want to establish a society oriented to economic equality. But the transcendental, ascetic and moral approach of Gandhi accepting the ideal of reduction of wants has little in common with the dominantly materialistic and technological orientation of modern western socialism which accepts the cult of rationalization of society and the accentuation of production. In a vague and loose sense the social and economic ideas of Gandhi may be comprehended under the rubric of "non-violent socialism" but from an accurate and theoretical standpoint, the title *Towards Non-Violent Socialism* is a misnomer. It would imply that the difference between Gandhism and socialism is only with reference to the technic of non-violence, otherwise they are generally similar. The dominantly societarian character of socialism with the emphasis on the collectivity would repel the individualist and prophetic soul of Gandhi. The merit of this book lies, however, in bringing together for the general reader as well as for the advanced student of Gandhiology, materials which were so long hidden in the various Weeklies edited by Gandhi in the course of his long political career.

The volume bearing the title *Sarvodaya* is a collection of Gandhi's writings pertaining to his concept of a perfect community.<sup>8</sup> Gandhi's Sarvodaya has its roots in the Vedantic concept of the spiritual unity of existence and the Gita-Buddhistic concept of *Sarvabhutahita* or the good of all living beings. Its wide idealism, thus, is opposed to the Lockean theory of majoritarianism, the Marx-Gumplowicz concept of class and racial struggle and the Benthamite formula of the greatest good of the greatest number. Just as in Plato's writings, his ethereal idealism is brought out in the *Republic*, while the *Statesman* and the *Laws* shows concessions to the realistic demands of human nature and the social structure of the *polis*, so also in Gandhi there may be said to be a realistic theory which was meant for immediate application for winning the freedom of India and for possible application in the near future as well as a more transcendent theory which inculcates a radical transformation of human nature and a more perfect incorporation of the moral technics in the corporate life of mankind. The Indian National Congress was Gandhi's vehicle for the realization of the first ideal while the Ashrama was meant to be a laboratory for experiments in the art of sanctified living. At a time when the Sarvodaya movement launched by Vinoba Bhave and J. P. Narayan is advancing in India, the publication of this book is to be welcomed. It will provide a good manual with reference to which the research student of contemporary Indian politics can compare the original

7 *Towards Non-Violent Socialism*, p. 165, by M. K. Gandhi. Edited by Bharatan Kumarappa. Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1951.

8 *Sarvodaya*, p.200, by M.K. Gandhi. Edited by Bharatan Kumarappa. Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1954.

Gandhian ideas on Sarvodaya with the plans and notions of the leaders of the contemporary Sarvodaya movement.

There is some duplication of materials in *Sarvodaya, Towards Non-Violent Socialism and Economic and Industrial Life and Relations*, but this is inevitable because some of the themes discussed in these volumes are common. The student of political theory and social philosophy cannot help feeling that in Gandhi's writings there is an absence of large-scale theoretical generalizations. Gandhi provides empirical suggestions for the solution of the immediately pressing problems. He did not have either the requisite time or the philosophical competence to work out mature academic expositions of his sociological, economic and political ideas and precepts.

The book by Richard B. Gregg<sup>9</sup> is a mature study in the field of Gandhian political thought. It seeks to stress the significance of non-violence as a potent social and political technic. Non-violence has been recognized as a prime element of self-culture in Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Vaishnavism and in the mystical tradition. Kant visualized a regime of perpetual peace based on federalism and republicanism. Herbert Spencer felt that industrialism would release an ethos and forces which would supplant the earlier emphasis on militarism. In the context of the portentous extensions of the engines of destruction in recent years, the sociological study of the creative community dynamics of non-violence is essential. It is comforting to find that for the solutions of group conflicts, industrial tensions and even inter-communal animosities, the technics of harmony, reconciliations and joint reciprocal co-operation are being widely practised. The Covenant of the League of Nations and the Charter of the United Nations recognize the importance of pacific settlement of international disputes through negotiation, conciliation, mediation, arbitration and judicial settlement. The concepts of democratic deliberations and socio-economic justice are also, in their essence, juristic formulations of the altruism of non-violence and their aim also is to extend the practice of reciprocity and mutualism in place of animosity and pugnacity. Researches in introspective psychology and human behaviour are making us aware of the immense nervous exhaustion involved in harbouring and expressing sentiments of anger, suspicion, hatred, fear, lust and cupidity. The futility of the solutions temporarily imposed by the sword is writ large on the widespread convulsions, tensions and crises of the twentieth century. In the atmosphere of gloom, fear and pessimism, a sober analysis of the sociological and political implications of non-violence would gain added significance. The author has been a close observer of the Indian political scene and had the advantage of having numerous discussions with Mahatma Gandhi on this problem. The importance of this book lies in the

<sup>9</sup> Richard B. Gregg, *The Power of Non-Violence*. With an introduction by Rufus M. Jones, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, Haverford College, U. S. A., (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, New edition, July 1949), p. 184.

fact that the author has also sought to utilize the immense knowledge gathered by western psychology in the field of group dynamics for substantiating the efficacy of the doctrine of altruism, love and co-operation in the solution of divers types of social and political conflicts.

Gregg is of the view that "Perhaps the East, as expressed by Buddha, Hindu ethics, the Jainas, Lao Tse, Christ and Gandhi, have studied psychology and 'behaviourism' more profoundly than any modern westerners have yet succeeded in doing"—(p. 50). He thinks that the immense social experience gained by the Oriental countries in course of their long historical evolution has provided them an insight into social and moral causation which may yet be rediscovered by the western nations as they have to face the tremendous social impacts of science and technology—(p. 51).

Richard Gregg believes that the human traits of love, faith, courage, honesty and humility exist in greater or less strength in every person—(p. 29) and by a disciplined process of self-training they can be utilized as bases of non-violent resistance. Since love involves the principle and essence of continuity of life, hence it can be more creative than anger—(p. 30). One of his prime theses is the repudiation of the materialistic historiology of Marx and the advocacy of a psychological interpretation of political and economic motivation and political and economic processes—(p. 91). Hence he proceeds to offer a psychological foundation for group action.

Some techniques and concepts of Gandhian sociology are sound and may be applicable not only in the Asian countries but also in the West. It is high time that instead of depending for food on other countries, even the highly industrialized nations should attempt agrarian self-sufficiency—(p. 96). Amidst the growing trends towards centralization, no thinker would grudge the emphasis on decentralization of power both in the political and economic spheres. The viruses of racialism and imperialism must be put an end to—(p. 179).

But in his quest for the moral technics of intelligent creative love as antidotes to cruelty, violence, aggression, the propensity to domination, hostile sentiments, paranoia and megalomania, Richard Gregg tends to underrate the political and economic aspects of liberty. He says : "Liberty is not an entity which can be secured by direct effort. Liberty is a by-product. It is the result of the creation of mutual trust and respect. Liberty is a moral affair and can be won only by moral means"—(p. 119). He also says : "So it is a mistake to think that liberty is of supreme value. What is of supreme value is the origin of liberty, namely, non-violent conduct and the above-mentioned elements which create mutual trust and mutual respect"—(p. 120). This reviewer upholds a different point of view. Liberty is a comprehensive concept and well has Rousseau in his *Social Contract* distinguished between natural liberty, civil

liberty, moral liberty and philosophical liberty. Liberty is the essence of a man's personality and to neutralize liberty from our actions may amount to the abnegation of our personality. The East has stressed liberty as disinterested action, deindividualization of the ego and a suppression of the baser elements of human passions. But the West has sponsored a quest for "Give me liberty or give me death." From the seventeenth century struggles for liberty in England and the American, and the French Revolutions in the eighteenth century to the advance of nationalistic movements in Asia and Africa, we see that the growth of liberty has also been accompanied with violence to the oppressors. Between liberty and non-violence, however, I personally will choose liberty. Gandhi always regarded non-violence as a means, and truth as a goal; between cowardice and violence he always stood for violence. Hence as students of history and politics we think it more realistic to support a jural order backed by violence as a last resort, than a complete acceptance of pacifism because in the latter alternative I see a danger that the unscrupulous aggressors would get their golden opportunity.

Richard Gregg has rightly stressed that the tremendous emphasis on prolonged moral discipline differentiates the Gandhian movement from the western schools of pacifism. Gandhi had the same supreme concern with the discipline, training and morale of his non-violent Satyagrahis as Napoleon and Foch had for those of their soldiers. Gandhi sincerely believed that without a deep, firm and living faith in God it was impossible to practise to the full the technic of Satyagraha because without sincere faith there was no other way in which a person could suffer injury and even assault on his person and not harbour the least feeling of revenge and violence. Gregg, in the Gandhian way, also recommends "the development of religious practices which will really give to many people direct experience of communion with God"—(p. 179). Does Gregg mean to exclude the agnostics, materialists, free thinkers and "the dwellers in an atheist's city" from the practice of non-violent resistance? Gregg ends with his suggestion that the "ultimate guidance of society and of governments shall rest with religious seers, who must themselves never take part in politics or hold any office but whose authority is purely moral and depends only on recognition of their actual wisdom"—(p. 179). To the professional student of sociology, this proposal would appear to be similar to the suggestions of Auguste Comte who advocated moral and spiritual governance by the 'priests' of his positivist utopia.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that journalists, professors and publicists are actively concerned with researches on Mahatma Gandhi's life and philosophy. The All-India Political Science Association has also brought out a book entitled *Gandhian Concept of State*.<sup>10</sup>

But almost all the volumes dealing with Gandhi's career and thought concentrate on the Indian phase of his life. There is an unusual pre-occupation only with the period 1920-1948. The period 1893-1914, when Gandhi's ideas were evolving, is sadly neglected. Even the *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*,<sup>11</sup> is very poor for the early period. It is surprising to find that Tendulkar has devoted seven volumes to Gandhi's life of 28 years (1920-1948) and only one volume to the period of 51 years (1869-1920). The research student of Gandhiology will like to study the distinct phases, processes and dynamics of the synthetic intellectual product called Gandhism and this involves a detailed elaborate study of its origin and evolution.

The materials collected in the first eleven volumes of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* present that side of the picture of the South African Satyagraha which impressed Gandhi himself. But in an objective historical study, the points of view of Gandhi's antagonists should also be presented. The materials collected in these volumes are mostly reprints from the *Indian Opinion*. But I am pleading for a dispassionate historical research analysing all sides of the story. A more thorough probe into the newspapers and archives of South Africa is essential. I suggest that soonest possible a team of experts on history and politics should be entrusted with the task of researches into the genesis and development of the South African Satyagraha movement. They should be deputed to go to South Africa and study there. Any loss of time may prove fatal, because the people, who had participated in that struggle or were students of it, are fast dying or may be dead. It is absolutely essential to make the vast materials, relevant to that period and struggle, available in this country. Otherwise, research students of Gandhian thought and practice will be put to great handicaps.

<sup>11</sup> *Mahatma Gandhi, His Life, Writings and Speeches*, (Madras, Ganesh & Co., 1921), enlarged edition.

## APPENDIX THREE

### RURAL VIOLENCE AND ITS REMEDIES<sup>1</sup>

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#### 1. Factors for Rural Violence

The theme of non-violence has been perennial in the history of social and political philosophy for the last twenty-five hundred years. The word *Ahimsa*, although not mentioned in the Vedic Samhitas, is used in the *Chhandogya Upanishad*<sup>2</sup> and has been made a dominant concept in Buddhism, Jainism and Puranic Vaishnavism. The Old Testament has a more aggressive conception of ethical behaviour, but the Sermon on the Mount preaches non-violence and non-retaliation. St. Francis and Teresa in the Middle Ages, and Tolstoy in modern times have been pronounced champions of non-violence. With the proliferation of the complexities of industrial capitalism, some writers felt that the militaristic organisation of society would be replaced by a non-warlike industrial organisation. But two great holocausts in the twentieth century have exposed the hollowness of this belief. We have witnessed mass destruction, vulgar sadistic brutalities and genocide on a scale unimaginable to people who thought that the Mahabharata war or the battles of Panipat or the French Revolutionary wars were the greatest examples of horrible destruction of human lives. In the context of the universal quest for security by violence and armed preparations, Gandhi stood as a champion of the creed of non-violence in all spheres and sectors of individual, social, political and international existence. Marx, Lenin, and Sorel, on the other hand, glorified the cult of violence, general strike etc., as legitimate technics for the capture of power by the proletariat in the modern society.

It is indeed shocking to find that in the land of Gautama Buddha, Mahavira and Gandhi, violence is on the increase in almost

1 This Appendix is based on a paper submitted to a seminar organised under the auspices of the Gandhi Sangrahalaya, Patna, on November 2 and 3, 1971. In this paper the factual and descriptive statements are mostly based on my impressions formed on the basis of the studies of the Bihar newspapers like *The Searchlight*, *The Indian Nation* and the *Aryavarta*. I have also some information about affairs in my village home Dharampur, the Grama (Dharampur) Panchayat and the Jalalpur Block in the district of Saran (Chapra).

2 Also used in the *Aitareya* and *Shatapatha Brahmanas*.

all sectors of life. Democracy is based on the triumph of reason, deliberation and argumentation. But although our formal commitment is to the philosophy and mechanics of representative democracy, in our practice, we are betraying our heritage and that poses a great threat not only to our democracy but even to our very existence as civilized human beings.

Rural violence, like other social phenomena, has multiple roots and causes. These can be arranged in four categories : (1) personal and familial, (2) social, (3) economic, and (4) political. Anthropologists and psychologists have pointed out that because of man's animal ancestry, there are elements of violence and pugnacity inherent in human nature. Personal violence resulting in mutual clash and indulgence in animosity, bickering, defamation, assault, grievous hurt etc., is a phenomenon that is present in the villages. Of course, this is not something peculiar to the village, but, like other spheres, villages are not immune from personal and familial quarrels. It is not possible to make a typological and qualitative distinction between rural violence and urban violence. Both are examples of or manifestations of one single psychological propensity. It may, however, be true that due to geographical and ecological factors, there are more land disputes in the villages than in urban areas. In the latter, the land disputes mostly refer to some kind of minor encroachments by one neighbour upon the house-land of another. On the other hand, violent feuds for the fixing of boundaries as well as for the possession of land are a predominant characteristic of the villages. It is true that with the growth of modernization there is bound to be growth of urbanization and, to that extent, land disputes will lessen because cultivable areas will be converted into zones for the habitation of the urban population. It may also be noted that there are more cases of theft in the villages than in the urban areas.

It has been seen that sometimes different caste groups in villages are organised against one another and that leads to violence. In my own village, I know that some years back there were chances of fight between two different castes. Such instances of caste violence can also be seen when one village is pitted against another.

In some areas in Bihar, the eviction of tenants from the land, they were cultivating, has also been a factor for violence.

During the time of floods or even temporary storage of water, it has happened that some villagers would cut down the common Bundh and then water would rush from one village to the other. Sometimes such instances of Bundh-cutting take place during night, and this does result in inter-village struggle.

Family feuds have been a general characteristic of village economics and politics and cases can be located in villages where, for decades, protracted litigation has been going on for the settlement of land problems. Furthermore, land disputes have sometimes

resulted even in loss of lives. Some of the newer laws with regard to inheritance will further intensify this aspect of the struggle.

Countless instances of the occurrence of violence for the acquisition, retention or distribution of land and other forms of property can be traced in all civilizations and in all countries. But recently it has happened that due to the coming into being of the Hindu Code Bill, widows have got the new right of bequeathing or willing their property to their daughters. This is becoming a potent factor of violence when the party of the bridegroom would, sometimes, come out with violent weapons to claim property in the village of their fathers-in-law or mothers-in-law.

Sometimes it has also happened that when fair-price shops or other kinds of grain shops have been established in villages, the people in whose charge such grain shops are, are prone to indulge in corrupt practices. I have learnt that sometimes when the police would go into villages to capture such culprits, then some of the villagers would forcibly try to seize the culprit from the custody of the police.

Cases of pilfering, theft, burglary and robbery have increased in the village side. It is possible that sometimes village fractions play their part in engineering instances of armed dacoity.

Elections have posed new problems for the rural countryside and it has been found that at the time of elections for the posts of *Mukhia* or *Sarpanch*, instances of violence have occurred. Furthermore, at the time of elections to Assemblies or Parliament also, villages have been subjected to different types of violent activities wherein caste elements and anti-social elements have their full play. With the coming in of democratic devices of representation, it is becoming increasingly clear that the villages are now being subjected to the infiltration of political party workers. They take advantages of old-continuing village fractions. But for this we cannot blame the political parties. It is a part of their strategy to enhance their political influence and power and for this they are liable to manipulate existing disputes and quarrels for their own advantage. Hence the real culprit is not the political party but that section of people which create feuds in villages.

The suppression of Harijans is also an important issue. Instances have occurred where the so-called higher castes have tried to deprive the Harijans of their newly acquired rights.<sup>3</sup> The problem of the eradication of violence occasionally perpetrated on the poor sections, backward communities, the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes is a major one. For centuries, these people have been oppressed and harassed by priests, by feudal landlords, by police authorities, by

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<sup>3</sup> A few Harijan students of the Saran district have complained to me of such instances.

executive authorities etc. They have been victims of social and political maladies of different kinds. No cultural revolution has succeeded in this country which could be said to have the aim of the emancipation of the masses in the true sense. Buddhism and Jainism started a protest movement against Vedic infallibility and priestly domination but their social fervour was also lost. Their rebellious character was sought to be stifled in the jungle of metaphysical abstractions. In the early days, Buddhism had produced a man like Upali who, although coming from the Barber caste, could rise to the maximum height of intellectual and moral prestige. But soon philosophers originating from priestly sections introduced the abstract arguments on the Vedantic and *Nyaya* pattern into Buddhism and hence after some centuries a movement which has taken the cause of the non-Brahmins for political and social ascendancy got lost in the maze of *Mahayanistic* metaphysics. Thus India did not experience any liberal movement of renaissance founded upon a broad-based cultural movement of social emancipation. The suppressed masses, in this country, accepted the philosophy of fatalism, resignation, *status quo* and the general creed of subservience to the religious, political and economic power-holders. Because of their ignorance, they accepted the universal sway of different types of power-holders.

The administrators and police authorities have also a major role to play in the perpetration of rural violence. Some of the sections of the Indian Penal Code, like section 107, have been misused and, sometimes, innocent villagers find themselves at the mercy of the police tyrants. In the realisation of loans taken by the village people also it is found that sometimes the authorities practice excessive violence. The poor and the backward villagers sometimes find themselves defenceless against police atrocities.

It is true that the police practice enormities in villages, and some of them are corrupt, venal and barbarous. If one talks with confirmed criminals or with dacoits they have a tale to reveal which gives us a completely different picture of the ethics of the police from what we are liable to imagine from police reports. So the police is, indeed, to share the blame for the perpetration of rural violence. In the lodgement of complaints as well as in the preparation of correct records, people have to face great difficulties. Hence steps have to be taken to reform the operativeness of the police structure. But politicians also have to share the blame for the effectiveness and the corruption of the police. I have heard reports from several quarters that politicians in power give protection to confirmed criminals because they utilize and manipulate the latter for their own political games. There seems to be an unholy alliance between the police and the politicians. Honest citizens and poor people, sometimes, become victims of unmerited harassment, some-

times from the police themselves and sometimes from the absence of police activities and effectiveness.

In spite of the fact that police as a group are prone to perpetrate atrocities on the poor people when they get such opportunities, I am also worried by the fact that due to police negligence and inefficiency, sometimes, precious lives are lost.<sup>4</sup>

It was hoped that villagers would be able to get cheap, fair and speedy justice from the Gram Kachehari but the pertinent experiences also have not been rewarding. On the other hand, the procedure of getting justice from the courts is so cumbrous, delaying and costly that for the poor villagers it is impossible to expect speedy, impartial and effective justice. Sometimes it may happen that a person who is to be awarded a sentence of two or three months may have to be lodged as a prisoner prior to the decision of the case for six to eight months or even a year. This is highly unjust and it does indicate the perpetration of violence, in a sense.

For centuries, the Indian population did not have any legitimate channels for expressing its vitality or exuberance. It was a society based on acquiescence. Now, with the coming of independence and adult franchise and the growing preoccupation of the political rulers with the maintenance of their own personal position and status, administrative efficiency is declining at all levels and what Plato said in his *Republic* is becoming more and more a realized phenomenon in our lives. He had referred to the degeneration of liberty into licence and the corruption of equality into indiscriminate equitaria-nism. It appears that, in this country, specially among the young there is a tendency to rowdyism and violence for its own sake, by taking advantage of the weakness and the looseness of the administration at several places. The only guiding maxim of the youth is—how many evil things they can do without being punished? This sordid pragmatism is becoming the guiding norm of the youth. This phenomenon is having its repercussions also in village areas where the college and educated young man are trying to create an atmosphere of tension and confusion in order to practice their own evil designs.

## 2. Remedies Suggested

It cannot be denied that rural violence, aside from the fundamental psychological forces which lead to its eruption, is also linked up with the breakdown of law and order machinery. For the last four to five years, from about 1965, due to various factors, the law and order machinery has become loose. It has to be tightened up.

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4 In urban areas, we have read about guardians being killed on the roadside while they were escorting their female wards to schools and colleges. Vice-Chancellors have been manhandled and assaulted, specially in Bihar, and teachers have been beaten for strict invigilation. Such instances of violence can be checked if the police tightens its vigilance and control machine.

Mahatma Gandhi, in one of his writings, has stated that villagers have to depend on their own strength for their self-defence.<sup>5</sup> It is not possible to supply police protection at all hours and at all places in the village locality. Hence some kind of village organisations on the line of a Peace-Group or Anti-social Elements Curbing Group is essential.

A deeper analysis of violence in our state and the country will reveal that not all sections of the population are prone to violent activities. It may be noticed that behind organised cases of violence there are always important caste or communal groups. Hence, ultimately, only when a more equalitarian society is established in this country can such instances of organised group violence be checked.

So far as personal, familial and minor cases of violence of the issue of property are concerned, the tightening up of the law and order machinery will be able to curtail that.

I will suggest the following Sixfold Programme for the eradication of rural violence :

(i) Setting up of Volunteer Committees or Citizens Committees consisting of influential villagers of repute who will take upon themselves the responsibility of maintaining peace in the village-side is an imperative necessity.

(ii) The law and order machinery has to be tightened up and it has to strengthen its striking force. Those who are guilty must be punished and it should be regarded as an act of treachery to the nation on the part of the guilty party if it seeks to be protected in any way on the basis of personal friendship or monetary allurements or kinship affinity. As immediate remedies for the checking of violence in the rural areas I think that the tightening of the machinery of law and justice is essential. It is true that the Indian legal system requires reforms at various levels. It is also true that the legal system should reflect the aspirations of the newer sections of society who are becoming politicized and are legitimately demanding their share in the good things of life as well as in the control of political and economic resources. Nevertheless, it must be maintained that the rule of law is the greatest bulwark of democracy. The law as it is and so long as it has not been changed, must be obeyed and efforts have to be made so that the legal system is not subverted. There has been a tendency in certain quarters to idealize and glorify the village. When the problems of urbanization and

M. K. Gandhi, "Real India", *Harijan*, October, 20, 1946, reprinted in *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol. II, pp. 156-57; "...it can be confidently asserted that the 700,000 villages get and want no police protection . . . We do not yet learn from the village in which India lives that every Indian, man or woman, is his or her own policeman . . . I am positive that India will not come into her own unless every home becomes its own castle . . ."

scientific mechanism seemed to tamper with the prevailing scheme of values, political thinkers in India began to dream of the restoration of the old village system. Against the assertive individualism and competitiveness of modern times, they found solace in the harmony, peace and truthfulness of the village. But I think that this villagism is faulty on two points. First, if we read ancient Indian literature we always find that the villages and the Janapadas were characterized by the dominance of the feudal elements. Most of the Janapadas were even known by the name of the ruling family, so great was the control of the latter. There is no concrete evidence to prove that the masses had any chance of participation in the village system or that they were treated on terms of equality. It is true that there was harmony but that harmony was there because the differences and antagonisms were undeveloped and the people as such acquiesced in the superiority of the priestly and the land-owning elements. There might have been occasional revolts but it is very difficult to maintain on the basis of historical records that the village system was characterized by liberty, equality and participation. Even if the argument were to be accepted that the village community possessed the attributes which its protagonists ascribe to it, it is impossible to go back. Ours is an era of individualism, assertion of individual rights and claims. It is unrealistic to draw any inspiration from the tribal system in Ghana or in any other country of sub-Saharan Africa. The African tribal polity is just now emerging from a state of primitivism and, to a certain extent, there might be some plausibility if some people were to maintain that in place of modernization, the African people should go back to their tribal days. But in India we have long ago left off the tribal polity and we simply cannot go back. Thus those conceptions of justice, illustrated, for example, where the members of the tribes used to sit together and decide cases on the basis of personal knowledge of the events and of the persons concerned, cannot be the ideal for modern India. We have to maintain the structure of the rule of law and the abstract impersonal provisions of the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Civil Procedure and the Criminal Procedure Code. If we compare the Hindu system of *Dharmashastra* law with the modern system, we cannot be blind to the fact that the modern systems do represent an advance on what operated in the days of the Smritis and the Arthashastra. For facing the juristic challenges of modernization I think that it will be useful to universalize the benefits of the modern system of rule of law for the people as a whole. Nevertheless, I do agree with those people who want to make our modern system less cumbersome and as well as less costly. I am painfully aware of the fact that in villages many families are destroyed in course of litigation and still they do not get proper remedies, so I whole-heartedly support the proposal to make our legal system less unwieldy and troublesome. But after nearly two centuries of the acceptance of western legal

system, it is simply impossible to go back to the days of tribal personalism and group responsibility for crimes and punishment.

(iii) A more distributivist society should be established in the country where the poorer and the weaker sections and other people who have so far been deprived of the advantages of decent citizenship should be able to breathe in an atmosphere of freedom, equality and justice. At the concrete level, for the realisation of a more distributivist society. I am in favour of using democratic and legal methods. Some of the extremists in Bengal and in Bihar have taken recourse to individual violence upon big cultivators but such violence, although it may have a terrorizing effect, is not expected to solve the question of land redistribution in the present context. On the other hand, it also appears that the technics of moral appeal as formulated and practised by the Sarvodaya movement have not also been very fruitful. Hence between the polar antitheses of violent and non-violent technics, at the present, I feel that the effective way will be the democratic channel of equitable legislation and the implementation of the laws so enacted. The various laws with regard to land redistribution have been, generally, ineffective. Taking advantage of the gaps and loopholes in the laws, even very big cultivators have redistributed their land amongst their family members and relations and practically there is nothing available for redistribution to the landless poor. It is true that a more equitable distribution of resources will check, to a certain extent, some of the manifestations of violence. But it will be unrealistic to hope that in the near future, say in the coming few decades, we are going to have a more peaceful society.

(iv) One unfortunate thing about village violence is this that with the increasing manufacture of guns, rifles, pistols and revolvers, it is now becoming easier to use these lethal weapons. Formerly, in the villages when there would be conflicts or struggles then Lathis and Bhalas and Pharsas were used. Their capacity of inflicting injury was much less in contrast to that of modern mechanical weapons. Hence in the grant of licences for the possession of fire-arms also great care has to be taken. So far as unlicensed arms are concerned the people have to be more watchful, and necessary information should be conveyed to the police.

(v) Those people who believe in the Gandhian technics of non-violence of the brave have also to institute training courses in the village areas so that villagers can develop the art of non-violent self-defence of the brave.

(vi) In order to eradicate the perpetration of violence on the poor and humiliated sections a threefold programmatic ideology is essential. First, they have to be given political power. Adult suffrage which have been given to them is bound to prove a weapon and instrument of utmost potency. Secondly, the proper use of adult fran-

chise has to be supplemented with economic betterment and increase of their share in the industrial and agricultural products. Complaints have been heard from several quarters that the green revolution is perpetuating the regime of economic inequality in the villages. The prosperous people are increasing in power and wealth. To some extent it will not be incorrect to say that the green revolution is intensifying the agency of village capitalism. In this context, economic egalitarianism has to be a potent remedy. Thirdly, besides deep economic transformation, cultural revolution is also essential. The feelings of superiority and subordination as operative among the different castes have to go. But social equality can only be established when the poorer sections, through receiving education, become the champions of their own rights. It will be idle to expect that those people who are profiting from the present unequal system will take the initiative for the genuine liberation of the masses.

(vii) Psychological remedies for the eradication of violent propensities have been suggested by the school of Freudian psycho-analysis. This school has emphasised the device of substitution of pugnacity by competitive emulation. Other devices like sublimation have also been indicated. Some of the writers who have been influenced by the Freudian philosophy have eloquently stressed the usefulness of the resort to the technics of identification, projection, substitution and sublimation as counteracting devices for nullifying the deviant and anti-social implications and effects of man's pugnacity and cupidity. In our individual and social life these technics can be taken resort to. But this remedy is applicable not only to the village-side but to mankind as a whole and it involves a long-term therapeutic device. It is also possible to supplement these psycho-analytic technics for the cultivation of social and universal altruism (*Ahimsa*) inculcated in the *Yoga-Sutras* of Patanjali. Patanjali maintains that if one practices the *Yama* of *Ahimsa*, in his presence all hatred ceases. The commentators of Patanjali like Vyasa, Nagesha and Ramananda Yati have expounded this Sutra of Patanjali. In the field of knowledge there is no East or West. Whatever insights have been found either by the Freudians or by the exponents of *Yoga* should be utilized in the pursuit of the building up of a society which is based not on pugnacity and barbarity but on civility, decency and growing love.

### 3. Conclusion

I do not think that the propensities to pugnacity, brutality and violence can be completely removed from human life. It will be essential, however, to see that the evil influence of these tendencies are not allowed to manifest their aggressiveness so far as social organisation is concerned. Even if the evils of violence cannot be ruled out completely from the human heart and mind, a social organisation has to be planned where the evils can be lessened and prevented from damaging the foundations, bastions and parapets of the social structure.

The problem of the eradication of violence from the rural areas is, ultimately linked up with the eradication of violence from the human society. So long as there is violence in the human heart, there are bound to be manifestations and eruptions of violence in the social structure. As social scientists we can make efforts to see that the agents of violence in organised life are curbed, if not completely eliminated. Social scientists have not merely to prescribe remedies and preach sermons but on the basis of their knowledge they have also to think out ways for giving correct shape to schemes of such universalistic proposals of social education which will enable the masses to share genuinely in the fruits of the social, economic and political system and thus lay the foundations of a creative citizenship in this country.

## APPENDIX FOUR

### REMINISCENCES OF MAHATMA GANDHI

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#### I

The first time that I saw Mahatma Gandhi was in 1934, in Madhubani. Mahatmaji had come to this town in order to see the devastation that had been wrought due to the catastrophic Bihar Earthquake on January 15, 1934. At that time I was a student of Class VIII in the G.M.S.S. School, Madhubani, in the district of Darbhanga. There was great rush in the meeting, held in the afternoon, and I could only catch, perhaps, a faint glimpse of Gandhiji in the Charkha Sangha Maidan. I have no recollection of his physical personality at that time. Somehow, the wrong impression that I had formed of him in my childhood and adolescent years of his being a short-statured dark-skinned man on the basis of his photographs in newspapers were confirmed by this first, very faint, glimpse of him.<sup>1</sup> Later on I found that Gandhiji was fair-skinned. Gandhiji had also started at that time a crusading campaign against untouchability and thereby had touched a soft spot in the body of orthodox society. In the meeting, a local orthodox Vakil, with one or two other persons, tried to make a black umbrella demonstration against Gandhiji. Perhaps, some volunteers roughly handled him for what they considered a bold and unwarranted act against the Mahatma.

The second occasion when I attempted to catch a glimpse of Gandhiji was in May, 1939. At that time I was a student in the First Year of the Intermediate class and was staying in Motihari with my revered father, the late Sri Ram Charitra Prasad, who was the District Inspector of Schools of Champaran. Gandhiji was going in a railway train, via Motihari, to Brindaban, the venue of the fifth All-India Gandhi Seva Sangh meeting, in the district of Champaran. There was a terrifically great rush on the Motihari Railway Station to see the Mahatma. The congregation of people was so very big that I was almost suffocating and I failed to see him. It was a profound relief to be out of that gigantic crowd. But after a few days, either at the end of the first or in the second week of May, I went to Brindaban which is situated at a distance of nearly 40 miles to the north-west from Motihari. I reached the meeting place nearly three

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<sup>1</sup> This would corroborate the view that at times even visual representations confirm wrong impressions formed in early years.

hours before the time scheduled for Gandhiji's appearance. Although I went there three hours earlier, I could get a seat at a considerable distance from the rostrum erected for the meeting. There was a tremendous, almost uncontrollable, influx of people. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was busy entreating the people, in Bhojpuri, to maintain peace. Gandhiji came at about 4 or 5 P.M., and the only thing that I remember is that he moved on the rostrum in all directions with folded hands and looked at the mighty concourse of human beings that had gathered to see him. Perhaps Gandhiji did not say anything. He only appeared for what was called *Darshana*. We, on our part, however, had not been interested in what he was going to say. We only wanted to see him. I do not recollect that in this *Darshana*, at that time, there was any religious feeling in my heart. The only feeling uppermost in my mind was that I was participating in a vast emotionally-charged dramatic scene.

In February, 1940, prior to the holding of the annual session of the Congress at Ramagarh, in the district of Hazaribagh, Gandhiji came to the Sadaqat Ashrama, Patna. Some students from the Jackson Hostel of the Patna College had gone to see him. I was one of them, although our final Intermediate examinations were going on. There was a vast congregation and, most probably, Gandhiji did not come to give *Darshana*. We were greatly disappointed. I do not know whether we would have succeeded in having his *Darshana*—so great and uncontrollable was the rush. I only remember that at one time I was very near the car of Jawaharlal Nehru and I remember being impressed by the physical personality of Jawaharlal Nehru.

In 1947, due to the repercussions of the Noakhali massacre of Hindus, there was a Hindu-Muslim riot in the Patna district and at a few other places in Bihar. On earnest request from Dr. Syed Mahmud, Gandhiji came to Patna. At that time I could see Gandhiji very clearly and distinctly. I have a very vivid recollection of his physical personality. I still remember the sense of determination that was embodied in his eyes. His eyes signified heroic and undaunted determination. I could see that Gandhiji was of medium stature and his reddish, copper-like skin was shining. His face was radiant with light. He was walking very fast to the southern side of the Bankipore Lawn with his hands on the shoulders of two girls, one of whom, probably, was his grand-niece. Later on, possibly, one evening Mahatmaji was walking with his hand on the shoulder of Mridula Sarabhai.

At that time Gandhiji addressed, for about ten days, regular evening prayer meetings in what is now called the Gandhi Maidan (that was then known as the Bankipore Lawn). One day Gandhiji began collecting subscriptions for relief fund. In order to elicit the maximum response, he declared that he would receive the money in his own hands. People formed something like a queue and began giving coins in his hand. I would put a coin of small denomination

in his hand and I repeated this performance four to five times in order to have an opportunity of touching his hand each time. I do not know that I had any religious feeling associated in this act of touching his palm. It might be that only a sense of being associated with a personality of historical stature was in my mind.

I attended Gandhiji's prayer meetings for several evenings. I still recollect being powerfully moved, at the emotional level, by hearing the chanting of texts from the Gita and the other holy scriptures that were recited at the commencement of the prayer meeting. The whole atmosphere was enchanted. Gandhiji wanted the assembled people to recite the *Rama Dhun*. He asked the people to clap with their palms in a rhythmical way (*Tal Dena*). Most people were confused and began to clap at random. Then Gandhiji, explained the distinction between *Tali dena* (ताली ढेना) and *Tal dena* (ताल ढेना). *Tali dena*, he stated, is clapping. On the other hand, he wanted the people to recite the *Rama Dhun* in a rhythmical manner. In other words, at the end of the syllables, the people were to give *tal*.

I also remember that in one of these prayer meetings, beside Gandhiji, sat Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. The latter made an impassioned appeal for Hindu-Muslim unity. He said that the Britishers were leaving India and the Hindus and Muslims should not behave in such a way that the country would be torn to pieces. He pointedly asked—baba Hindustan kiska hai ? (बाबा ! हिन्दुस्तान किसका है ?).

## II

I had gone to Chicago in the last week of January, 1948. In the early morning of January 31, 1948, a student told me on the phone that Gandhi had been killed. I was shocked, although in the context of the ugly, surcharged and hate-ridden atmosphere, the event was not absolutely unexpected. I had an appointment on that day with Professor Ogburn, the noted sociologist, of the University of Chicago, and I remember that Professor Ogburn was moved. The American newspapers carried big headlines for two days. There were editorials and comments on the world-historical character of Mahatma Gandhi's personality and message.

After my return from Chicago to New York, where I was a student at that time, I had the chance of attending a memorial meeting held in the New York Public Hall which was addressed by important members of the Security Council of the United Nations. On that occasion Andrei Gromyko of the Soviet Union, Philip Noel-Baker of England and Norman Thomas, the American socialist leader paid their glowing and sincere tributes. One of Noel-Baker's lines I still remember. He had said : "Gandhi triumphed. The British Empire has ended." Gopalswami Aiyyangar, who was representing

India's case on the Kashmir issue, also spoke. He referred to Gandhiji's instructions to him on the Kashmir question.

I attended another memorial meeting held in the Ramakrishna Vivekananda centre in New York to pay homage to the departed soul. On that occasion I had the opportunity to hear Reverend John Haynes Holmes. Holmes was one of the earliest admirers and interpreters of Mahatma Gandhi and he had the boldness and foresight to proclaim as early as 1920 that Gandhi was the greatest man in the world in the modern age. In this memorial homage, Holmes emphatically declared that Gandhi was the greatest Indian since Gautama Buddha and the greatest figure in human history since Jesus Christ.

It is one of the griefs of my life that I could not get the opportunity of talking to the Mahatma.

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## INDEX

### A

- A**  
 Abbas Tyabji, 117  
*Abhayam, of Bhagavadgita*, 12, 81,  
     187  
 Abstract Monism, 35  
 Absolutists, 36  
 Abu Baker, 265  
 Adult Suffrage, 403  
*Advaita*, 40, 42  
 Aesthetics, 44  
 Agatha Harrison, 53  
 Agrarianism, 295  
 Agricultural labourer & peasant,  
     325  
 Augustus, 7  
*Aham*, 339  
*Ahimsa* (Non-violence), 4, 5, 8,  
     16, 28, 42, 46, 47, 51, 52, 55, 58, 68,  
     81, 83, 84, 95, 104, 111, 138, 152,  
     193, 257, 270, 274, 284, 287, 396-  
     404 ;—Foundations and Theory,  
     153-62 ;—The applicability of  
     the Absolute Law of Ahimsa,  
     162-66 ;—Weaknesses in the  
     theory of, 166-69 ;—and world  
     politics, 169-72 ;—Merits, 172-  
     76 ;—and Western Political and  
     Sociological Thought, 176-78 ;  
     —Its application to world poli-  
     tics (169n, 170n);—Fields for the  
     exercise of Ahimsa (165n)  
*Aitareya Brahmana*, 11D  
*Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh*,  
     351  
 Albigeois, 173  
 Alexander, 14  
 All India Spinners Association,  
     137  
 Altruism, 8  
 American Revolution, 394  
 Amery, 19  
 Anarchists, 349  
 Anarchy, Enlightened, 257  
*Anasakti*, 68, 86, 232, 389  
 Andrews, Rev. C. F., 10, 116, 388  
*Anekantavada*, Jaina Metaphysics  
     and Gandhism, 39  
 Ansari, M. A., 117  
*Antaratman*, 322, 378  
*Aparigraha*, 81, 92, 122, 127, 128, 139  
 Apollonian, Dionysian and Faus-  
     tian, 15  
*Apology*, of Plato, 269  
 Appeal of Gandhi, 53  
 Aquinas, St. Thomas, 243, 268,  
     271  
 Arabs, 385  
 Arbitration, 275  
 Aristotle, 3, 41, 54, 103, 126, 145, 146,  
     180, 228, 323, 329, 386  
 Arjuna, 67  
 Arnold, E., 30, 31, 68  
 Arnold, M., 60, 68  
*Arthashastra*, 402  
 Arya Samaj, 64, 65  
 Ashoka, 8, 42, 62, 256, 272  
 Ashvaghosh, 153  
 Asian Relations Conference at  
     New Delhi (1947), 22  
 Asiatic Department of Trans-  
     vaal, 9  
 Asiatic Registration Act, 252  
*Asprishyatavarana*, 82  
 Assyrian emperors, 7  
 Assyrian empire, 175  
*Asteya*, 81, 138, 311  
*Asuri and tamasika*, 49  
*Asvada*, 81  
*Atmadaha* (self-immolation), 378  
 Atheism, 34  
*Atman*, 315  
*Atma-nigraha*, 49  
 Augustine, St., 3, 6, 17, 75, 76, 143,  
     235, 266, 267, 271, 308

- Aurangzeb, 7  
 Aurobindo, 66, 94, 104, 301, 329, 347  
 Austin, 255, 260, 261, 291, 348  
*Autobiography*, of Gandhi, 23, 72, 193, 219, 290  
*Avatarā*, 17
- B
- Babylonian civilization, 95  
 Bakunin, 299  
 Bauer brothers, 299  
 Banerjee, Surendranath, 12  
 Barbarossa, Frederick, 7  
 Barker, Ernest, 5, 29n, 242n  
 Bastiat, 287  
 Bawerk, Bohm, E. V., 310, 319  
 Beesly, E. S., 288n  
 Behavioural Science, 272  
 Bentham, 87, 88, 291  
 Benthamite utilitarianism, 87, 88  
 Bentley, 217  
 Berdyaev, 89, 307  
 Bergson, 301  
 Bernstein, 309  
 Besant, Annie, 17  
 Bhagavadgita, 23, 37, 43n, 63, 67, 122, 146, 160, 165, 190, 268, 269-389  
*Bhagavat Purana*, 35  
 Bhakhra Nangal, 384  
 Bhatta, Shamal, 189  
 Bharavi, 112  
 Bhartrihari, 83  
 Bhavabhuti, 145  
 Bhave, Vinoba, 333, 338n, 350n, 354, 391 ;—his views on the evolution of state, 349 ;—criterion of ideal polity, 350, 360n, 363 ;—on Bhoodan, 354 ;—on Satyagraha, 362-363  
 Bhisma, 66, 77  
 Bhoodan, 342  
 Bible, The, 56, 64, 269, 307  
 Bihar Earthquake (1934), 55  
 Biography of Gandhi, by Doke, 152  
 Birkenhead, 13  
 Bismarck, 15, 276
- Blackstone, 291  
 Blainville, 288n  
 Blake, Robert, 106  
 Blavatsky, Madame, 30  
 Bodhisattva, 42  
 Boer War, 9, 157  
 Bogdanov, 325  
 Bohm Bawerk, 310, 319  
 Bolshevism, 142  
 Bonald, 308  
 Bondaref, T. M., 143  
 Boniface VIII, 72  
 Bosanquet, B., 51, 177, 224, 225  
 Bose, N. K., 109, 127n  
 Bose, S. C., 12, 343  
 Botton, Glorney (*The Tragedy of Gandhi*), 199n  
 Boulding, 5  
 Bourgeois, Leon, 287  
 Bradley, F. H., 89, 299, 307, 322  
*Brahmacharya*, 209, 281, 389  
 Bread Labour, 82  
 Bridges, J. H., 288n  
 Bright, 176  
*Brihat & Virat*, 167  
 British Imperialism, 11  
 Bruno, 299  
 Bryce, 217  
 Buddha, 3, 6, 8, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 29, 52, 55, 56, 63, 68, 69, 70, 86, 87, 112, 113, 153, 158, 159, 268, 272, 273, 303, 304, 312, 332-333, 387-393  
 Buddhism, 42, 68, 166, 179, 269, 271, 287, 304, 305, 330-334, 392, 396, 399  
 Buddha's contribution, according to Gandhi, 69  
 Bukharin, 143  
 Bureau, 269  
 Bureaucracy, 384  
 Burke, E., 95, 110  
 Bury, J. B., 287n  
 Bushman, 303
- Cabinet Mission Plan, 284

- Caesar, 7, 14, 23  
 Caliphate (Institution in Turkey), 75, 115, 284  
 Callicles, 349  
 Calvin, 7, 43, 269  
 Capitalist Exploitation, 366  
 Carlyle, 30, 116  
 Carpenter, Edward, 309  
 Caste System, 109  
 Catlin, 163, 256n, 264n  
 Cavour (of Italy), 45  
 Cecil Rhodes, 24  
 Cephalus, 282  
 Cesare Borgia, 8  
*Chhandogyopanishad*, 303, 116, 373, 396  
 Chapman, John, 288n  
 Charlemagne, 7  
 Charles I, 182  
*Charkha*, 137  
 Chatterjee, B. C., 93  
 Chelmsford, 252  
 Chiang-kai-Shek, 22  
 China, 376  
 Chinese attack on India (1962), 376  
 Christ, Jesus, 6, 14, 15, 22, 26, 28, 29, 30, 70, 74, 122, 146-147, 151, 153, 272, 273, 311, 386-393  
 Christianity, 34, 63, 64, 179, 392  
 Churchill, W., 15, 325  
 Cicero, 23, 76, 243, 268, 271  
 Civil Disobedience, 11, 165, 193, 194, 203, 205, 207, 211  
 Civilization, 89-92  
 Civil Religion (of Rousseau), 74  
 Clarendon, 23  
 Class Struggle, 360-361, 366  
 Cobden, 176  
 Cohen, H., 301  
 Cole, G.D.H., 5, 36n, 291, 310n  
 Columbus, 24  
 Communal Award, 111, 200, 378  
 Communism, 142, 236  
 Communist Party, 186  
*Communist Manifesto*, 129  
 Comte, Auguste, 55, 144, 176, 287-297;—Introduction, 287-288;—his valuational and teleological approach to the problems of society, 289 ;—the influence of St. Simon and Clotilde de Vaux, 289 ;—Methodology, 290-291 ;—His scheme of human evolution, 291 ;—Protagonist of the religion of humanity, 293 ;—Critique of capitalism, 293-295 ;—Social structure, 296-297  
 Concordantia, 24, 25  
 Congress Working Committee, 165  
 Constitution of India, 372  
 Constructive Programme, 134, 245  
 Condorcet, 288n  
 Confucius, 273  
 Congreve, G. R., 21, 151  
 Corruption, 384  
 Crimean War, and Tolstoy, 151  
 Cripps Mission, 284  
*Crito* (Plato), 224  
 Croce, B., 76, 301, 307  
 Cuhnc, 100  
 Cultural Pluralism, 105  
 Cunow, 309  
 Czar, Czardom, 306, 324  
 Czechoslovakia, crisis in, 375
- D
- Daivi Sampatti*, 82  
 Danilevsky, 89  
 Dandi march, 11  
 Dante, 106  
 Darius, 7  
*Daridranarayan*, 41, 55  
 Darwin, 179  
 Darwinian Evolutionalism, 98, 179, 347  
 ‘Dasrajya Yuddha’ (Rigveda), 166  
 Das, Bhagwan, 66, 70  
 Das, C. R., 12, 54, 70, 289  
 Dasharath, 267  
 David, 74  
 Davids, C. A. F., 69

- Dayananda, 14, 65, 84, 102, 104, 108,  
112, 311, 329, 333, 371
- Decentralization, 181, 245, 384
- Decentralization and Khadi, 137-  
138
- De Maistre, 110, 308
- Democracy, 350-355 ;—Its Party-  
less Character, Technics for  
realization, 352
- Democritus, 300
- Determinism, 307
- Devayana*, 59
- Dewey, John, 319
- Dharma, 64, 83, 197, 349, 379
- Dharmadhikari, 351
- Dharmashastras, 402
- Dharma Sutras, 113
- Dharmya-Samgraha*, 166
- Dhawan, Dr. G. N., 259
- Dialectic, three laws of, 300-301
- Diderot, 103
- Dignaga, 299
- Dionysian, 15
- Direct action, 378
- Directive Principles of State  
Policy, 372
- Disraeli, 15
- Distribution, equal and equitable,  
226
- Divine determinism, 46
- Doke, J., 10n, 190n, 387
- Doukhobours, 195
- Draupadi, 290
- Driesch, Hans, 301
- Dühring, 319
- Durkheim, E., 168, 288
- Dyer, 252
- E**
- Eckhart, 106
- Eddington and idealism, 301
- Edgar, 299
- Egyptian civilization, 179
- Ekadash Mahavrata*, 80, 83
- Elitism, 305
- Emerson, 192
- Encirclement of Indian Parlia-  
ment, 379
- Encyclopaedia* (Hegel's), 269
- Engles, F., 129, 143, 225, 299, 301,  
303, 306, 309, 324
- Epaminondas, 7
- Epicurus, 300
- Epistemology in Gandhian Thou-  
ght, 36
- Equality and theism, 85
- Erasmus, 56
- Ethical absolutism, 80, 83
- Ethical Religion, 59
- Existentialist philosophers, 308
- Extremists, 196
- F**
- Faith, 36, 37
- Family Planning, 378
- Fascism, 237
- Faustian, 15
- Fenelon, 288
- Feudalism, 385
- Feuerbach, his materialism, 300,  
329
- Fichte, and Kant and Comte,  
268, 275
- Finer, Herman, 217
- Fisher, L., 8n
- Fleurant, 287
- Fra Dolcino, 173
- Fra Girolamo Savonarola, 173
- Francis, Saint, 387, 396
- French Revolution, 394
- Freudian, 347
- Fourier, Charles, 132
- Fromm, E., 364
- Fundamental Rights, 227
- G**
- Gajendra, 290
- Gajendra *Moksha*, 35
- Gandhi—his personality, 6-10 ;—  
as a nationalist leader, 10 ;—  
his leadership, 10-20
- Gandhi and Auguste Comte ;—  
Introductory, 287-290 ;—their  
main activities, 287-288; Metho-  
dology, 290-292;—their views on  
Religion of humanity, 292-293;—

- critique of Capitalism, 293-295;—Agrarianism, 295 ;—Differences in the Theory of Social Structure, 296-297
- Gandhi, M.K., and Lenin—Common points in their ideologies, 324 ;—views on religion, 325 ;—views on Agricultural Labour, 325 ;—critique of Imperialism, 325 ;—their economic philosophies—differences, 326
- and Marx, Karl—Introductory, 298-299 ;—Metaphysical Idealism and Dialectical Materialism, 299 ;—Ethical Absolutism & Ethical Relativism, 302-305 ;—Religion as a factor in History, 305-308 ;—Sociology and Economics, 308-313 ;—Philosophy of Politics, 313-314;—As anarchist, 313-314;—Philosophy of Freedom, 314-318 ; Conclusion, 318-320
- and Max Weber, 97,98,233
- and Plato—Plato's influence on Gandhi, 281 ;—Plato's and Gandhi's spiritual approach to History, 282 ;—Plato's and Gandhi's views on division of labour as the basis of society, 282 ;—Plato's Concept of Courage and Gandhian Concept of *Abhayam*, 283 ;—Platonism, Communism and Gandhian Concept of Trusteeship, 283 ; Platonic theory of Philosopher Ruler & Ram Rajya, 283 ;—Plato and Gandhi, as critics of democratic excesses, 284 ;—differences, 284-286
- Gandhi, M. K., and Anarchism, 257-260;—and Austianism, 253-254 ;—and Buddhism, 68-69;—Cultural Pluralism, 105 ;—and Islam, 30,64,305 ;—Hinduism, 68-69;—and Hobbesian Political Thought, 32,76 ;—Humanism, 55-58 ;—and Machiavellian Politics, 75
- Gandhi, his leadership in South Africa—his views on individual freedom, 223
- his views on nature cure, 100
- his bitterness against Western Civilization, 101
- his bitterness against Western Education, 102
- Gandhi, M. K.—his metaphysics and Political Theory, 30-47
- Theory of karma and rebirth, 43-44
- his theory of freedom and determinism, 43-44
- on Truth and its political implications, 44-45
- his spiritual and moral philosophy of history, 45-47
- his theory of human nature in politics, 48-55
- his political theory (Methodology), 218-219
- on religious basis of politics, 69-76
- his Methodology, 218
- his theory of rights, 219-225
- his views on the Rights of Man (H. G. Wells), 224
- his theory of decentralization, 245
- his theory of Internationalism, 260-264
- his theory of Karmayoga and Freedom, 40
- his theory of World Federation, 263
- his theory of Ekadash Vratas (Eleven Vows), 80, 83n, 159
- his theory of Freedom, 225-233
- his theory of Trusteeship, 128-129
- his concept of Economic Equality, 146-147

- his concept of Equality and Justice, 234-236
- his theory of Democracy, 180-182
- his critique of Satyagraha, 212-213
- his views on Democracy, 240-243, 244
- his critique of Western Democracy, 237-240
- Foundations of Democracy, 240-241
- on evolution of Indian Social System, 112-115
- on Caste System, 107-111
- on Caste Structure, 109
- on the merits and demerits of caste system, 109-111
- on Untouchability, 111
- his theory of Divine Law, 76
- his theory of inner conscience, 76-77
- his theory of true civilization or moral civilization, 89-94
- his theory of Nationalism, Romanticism and Civilization, 94-103
- his theory of Ram Raj, 264-267
- his critique of Industrialism, 129-133
- his theory of ethical socialism, 138-142
- his theory of spiritual socialism, 138-142
- his critique of communism, 142-143
- his critique of capitalism, 126-128
- his reconciliation of individual rights and social restraints, 219-223
- teleological conception of rights, 219-223
- origins of his theory of Satyagraha, 188-191, 200-208
- his theory of Public Administration, 162
- his theory of Rural Economics and Land-ownership, 133-136
- on Economics of Khadi, 137
- his concept of Labour, 127
- his theory of Bread Labour, 143
- Democratic Decentralization, 135
- his Utopianism, 170
- on education and politics, 266-267
- his opposition to urbanism, 101-102
- his theory of non-violence, 153-162
- on application of absolute law of non-violence, 162-166
- on three fields for the exercise of non-violence, 165
- weaknesses in the theory of non-violence, 166-169
- on the application of non-violence in world politics, 169-172
- his critique of State Capitalism, 126-128
- on Communal Unity, 115-121
- on Hindu-Moslem Tension, 119
- on Two Nations Theory, 120
- his theory of Moral and Psychological Approach to Economics, 122-123
- his theory of Constructive Programme, 135
- on ethical Religion, 74
- on Secularism, 77-79
- on Social and Political Plan for Future India, 75
- on religious evolution and its phases, 30-31
- on God, 32
- His role in world history and politics, 21
- His place in World History, 26, 29
- on Family Planning, 380

- on Unemployment, 382
- on Wages, 382
- on General Will, 385
- and Gandhiology, 387-388
- his theory of Non-violence, 153-162
- on Legitimacy of Violence in Democracy, 182
- his theory of Satyagraha, its forms and techniques, 200-208
- on conditions for the success of Satyagraha, 209
- his Philosophy of the State, 251-253
- his Opposition to the Hegelian and Austinian Theory of Sovereignty, 253-254
- on Ideal Society and Swaraj, 254-257
- his religious anarchism, 257-259
- his contributions to Political Philosophy, 269-277
- Gandhi & Contemporary Political Philosophers, 384
- Gandhism in National and World Politics, 275-277
- Gandhism and Contemporary Indian Economics, 380-385
- Gandhism and Contemporary Public Administration, 384-385
- Gandhism and Contemporary International Politics, 385-386
- Gandhi-Irwin Pact, 15, 211
- and Thoreau on Unjust Law, 191
- his views on Social Boycott, 204n
- his views on distinction between civil disobedience and civil resistance, 205
- on different types of civil disobedience, 206
- on Peace Brigade, 208
- his views on the subjective conditions of leadership, 210
- his views on Social and Psy-
- chological conditions for the success of Satyagraha, 211
- his views on rules for Satyagrahi, 212
- critique of his view of Satyagraha, 212
- on the obedience to the laws of the state, 213-214
- his methodology, 218
- Religious and moral approach to Politics, 219
- civil and moral rights, 219-220
- his views on the Rights of Man (H. G. Wells), 224
- his views on Liberty, 225
- his views on Freedom, 225
- his views on Complete Civil Liberty, 227
- his views on the independence of the judiciary, 227
- his views on Political Freedom, 227
- on main essence of Swaraj (Eleven Points), 228
- on Economic Freedom, 231
- on moral and spiritual freedom, 231
- on distinction between Ancient & Modern Justice, 236
- on theory of Democracy, 237; theory of Real Democracy, 239
- on Foundations of Democracy, 240
- on Educational Foundations of Democracy, 241
- on Tolerance, 242
- on Democracy in India, 244
- on disbanding the Congress Organisation and Lok Sevak Sangh, 246-247
- his Philosophy of the State, 251
- on Coercive Power of the State, 252
- on ideal society and swaraj, 254
- on the character of Police, 255

- on proposed Indian swaraj, 255
- on Indian Government, 255
- on resistance to unjustified law, 259
- on Internationalism, 260
- on the League of Nations, 261
- on Nationalism, 261-262
- on pacific settlement of international disputes, 275
- Gandhism and Hindu Political Thought, 77
- Ganesh Shankar Vidyarathi, 118, 379
- Gautama Buddha, 14
- Gehrlich, 307
- Gentile, 301
- George V, King, 20
- Gita (Bhagavadgita), 17-18, 32, 42, 46, 64, 68, 80
- Gherao, 305, 378
- Glaucon, 282
- Gladstone, 14, 69
- Godse, Nathu Ram, 27
- Godwin, 314
- Goethe, 23
- Gokhale, 12, 28, 69, 70, 234, 252
- Gosnell, 217
- Government of India Act (1919 & 1935), 284
- Govind Singh, Guru, 102
- Gramdan, Movement, 343,— against mechanical civilization, 345
- Green, T. H., 128, 224, 225, 269, 301, 321, 322
- Gregg, 388, 392, 394
- Gregory VII, 72
- Gromyko, 408
- Grove, 299n
- Gunther, John, 199n
- Gurukul Kangri, 233
  
- H
- Haeckel, 272, 301
- Hakim Ajmal Khan, 117
- Hamilton, 312
- Hans Driesch, 301
- Hansen, 309
- Haribhadra, 34
- Harrison, F., 288
- Hartal, 201
- Hebrew Theocracy, 74
- Hegel, 4-5, 45, 94, 97, 128, 144, 174, 235-254, 255, 269, 301, 322, 348
- Heimann, Eduard, 307
- Herder, 45
- Herodotus, 284
- Herzen and Tolstoy, 252
- Hind Swaraj (of Gandhi)*, 94, 96, 100, 102, 103n, 104, 106n, 111, 130, 131, 132, 226, 309
- Hindu-Muslim Tension, 119
- Hindu-Muslim Unity, 65, 115, 200
- Hindu Scriptures, 36
- Hinduism, 23, 36, 63, 64, 67, 68, 111, 166, 287, 306
- Hippodamus, 54
- Hitler, 18, 170
- Hobbes, Thomas, 3, 24, 32, 76, 300, 343, 345, 348
- Hobhouse, L. T., 237, 269
- Holism (J. C. Smuts), 301
- Holbach, 300
- Holmes, John H., 14, 20, 26, 29
- Home Rule League, 17, 216
- Hotman, 209
- Hugo, Victor, 103
- Human nature (in Politics), 48
- Human rights, charter of, 308
- Humbol, W. V., 250
- Hunger Strikes, 375
- Hussites, 173
  
- I
- Ibn Saud, 22
- Idealism (German), 48, 83
- Imperialism, 179, 220, 236, 237, 308
- Imperium*, 14
- Indian Bourgeoisie, 13
- Indian Civil Service, 242
- Indian Constitution, 373
- Indian National Congress, 13, 18, 102, 165, 204, 236, 289, 391

- Karachi Session (1931), 227  
 Indian Culture, 106  
 Indian Nationalism, 261-262  
 Indian Penal Code, 223, 399, 402  
 Indian Planning, 381, 384  
 Indian Socialist Party, 138  
 Indian Spinners Association, 248  
 Indian National Army of Subhash Chandra Bose, 12, 373  
 Indus Civilization, 179  
 Industrialization, 390  
 Irving, W., 269  
 Irwin, 53  
*Isha Upanishad*, 63, 67, 128  
 Islam and Islamic, 30, 64, 305  
 Israel, 345, 385
- J**
- Jainism, 63, 166, 287, 396-399  
 Jallianwala Bagh, Massacre of, 17, 88  
 James, 61n  
 Janpadas, 402  
 Jaykar, 375  
 Jeans, 301  
 Jefferson, 8, 225, 243, 250  
 Jinnah, M. A., 120, 230  
 Joad, C.E.M., 277  
 John Macmurray, 13  
 John of Salisbury, 269  
 Jones, Stanley E., 212n  
 Joseph, J. Doke, 26  
 Judaism, 64, 305  
 Julius Caesar, 7, 14, 23  
 Just, 100
- K**
- Kabir, 29, 102, 112, 117  
 Kalidas, 23, 112  
 Kaliyuga, 99  
 Kallenbach, 207  
 Kamal (of Turkey), 22, 115  
 Kant, 3, 5, 33, 76, 176, 222, 271, 302, 303, 321, 323, 334, 392  
 Karachi Congress, 4, 227  
 Karma, 43, 227  
 Karamyoga, 17, 40, 46, 60, 61, 83, 233, 305, 322
- Karmayogi, 58, 232  
 Kasturba, 6  
 Kautilya, 77  
 Kautsky, Karl, 268, 325  
 Kelkar, N. C., 375  
 Kelsen, 5, 291  
 Kellog-Briand Pact, 385  
 Keyserling, C. H., 93  
 Key, V. O., 217  
 Keynes, 5  
 Khadhi, Economics of, 18, 132, 137, 138, 383, 390  
 Khalifa, Omar, 8  
 Khan, Abdul Gaffar, 117, 408  
 Khan, Chenghizh, 252  
 Kher, 388, 390  
 Khilafat Movement, 18, 75, 115, 117  
 Khrushchev, Nikita S., 338  
 Kidd, B., 104, 237  
 Kipling, 104  
 Kneip's influence on Gandhi, 100  
*Koinonia*, 366  
 Koran, 30, 64 (Sale's Translation, 116-B)  
 Krabbe, 5, 174  
 Kriplani, J. B., 69  
 Krishna, 15, 20, 22, 67, 91, 153, 166, 333  
 Kropotkin, 144, 174  
 Kumarappa, J.C., 388, 391
- L**
- Labour Test, 145  
 Ladha Maharaj, 34  
*Laissez-Faire*, 126  
 Lala Lajpat Rai, 12, 45  
 Lamarck, 272  
 Lao-Tse, 8, 393  
 Laski, H. J., 217, 218, 269, 307  
 Lassalle, 299  
 League of Nations, 392  
 Leigh Hunt, 42  
 Lenin, N., 54, 143, 268, 269, 309, 313, 324-326—Gandhi and Lenin, 387-396  
 Lester, M., 115  
 Leviathan, 372

- Lincoln, 8  
 Lindsay, A. D., 307n  
 Linlithgow, 53  
 Locke, J., 62n, 288 ;—his theory of Majoritarianism, 391  
 Lohia, R. M., 375  
 Lokaniti, 350  
 Lokaniti & Rajniti, 359  
 Lollards, 173  
 Luther, 7, 385  
 Laxman, 58n, 267
- M**
- Machiavelli, 8, 24, 75, 173, 276  
*Machtpolitik*, 175-176, 274  
 MacIver, R.M., 5  
 Madame Blavatsky, 30  
 Madariaga, S., 364  
 Madhva, 35  
 Mahabharat, 67-68, 166, 287, 303, 314, 396  
 Mahavira, 16, 29, 112, 153, 272, 273, 396  
 Mahayana, 42, 398  
 Mahmud of Ghazni, 7  
 Mahmud, Syed, 407  
 Majoritarianism, 361  
 Malaviya, M. M., 12  
 Malkiyat, 342  
 Malebranche, 315  
 Malthus, 104  
 Malukadas, 122  
*Mangal Prabhat*, 127  
 Manu, 77, 145  
 Maoist China, 186, 337  
 Marshall, 5  
 Marsiglio, 76  
 Martin Luther King, 22  
 Martineau, 288n  
 Martynov, 325  
 Marx, Karl, 5, 32, 56, 58, 104, 129, 131, 141-143, 146-147, 179, 251, 268, 271, 334, 347, 366, 396 ;—Bakunin's views on the genius of Marx, 299n ;—his dialectical Materialism, 299-302 ;—Relativism, 302-305 ;—his views on Religion, 305-308 ;—Marxism & Western
- Industrial World, 309-310 ;—Marx's *Capital*, 310-311 ;—his views on Labour, 311 ;—his views on Capitalistic process, 312-313 ;—his views on Capitalist state and Proletarian dictatorship, 313-314 ;—on Freedom, 316-318  
 Marx, as a product of Renaissance, 315  
 Marxian School, 217  
 Masaryk, 309, 319  
 Massignon, 239  
 Materialism, 90, 299-302, 332  
 Maya, 42  
 Mazumdar, B. B., 394n  
 Mazumdar, Haridas T., 53, 259  
 Mazzini, 225, 268  
 Mehta, Pheroz Shah, 219  
 Meinecke, 45  
 Mediation, 275  
 Meghanada, 58n  
 Meiji Restoration in Japan, 21  
 Metaphysics, 398  
 Metaphysical Idealism, 31, 80  
 Michels, Roberto, 217  
 Mill, J. S., 88, 239  
 Millikan, 301  
 Milton, 46  
 Mises, Ludwig Von, 310, 319  
 Mohammad, 8, 22, 116  
 Monarchomachs, 73  
 Mongol Empire, 7, 337  
 Mosca, G., 238  
 Moses, 22, 173, 273  
 Muhammad, 8, 22, 116, 200  
 Mukhia, 398  
*Mundakopanishad*, 287  
 Munich Pact (1938), 158  
 Mussolini, 7, 18
- N**
- Nadir Shah, 7  
 Nagarjuna, 299  
 Nag, Kalidas, 43n, 204  
 Nagasena, 153  
 Nana Saheb, 371  
 Nanak, 102, 273  
 Naoroji, Dadabhai, 16

- Napoleon, 7, 14  
 Narmadashankar, 33  
 Narasi Mehta, 33, 34  
 Narayan, Jay Prakash, 331n, 334n, 338n, 350n, 363n, 391 ;—his views on Gandhian Satyagraha, 197n ;—his views on full trusteeship, 343 ;—his views on sampattidan, 343 ;—his views on Social Structure, 360 ;—on communitarian system, 364-366  
 Natal Assembly, 221  
 Natal Indian Congress, 8, 9  
 Nationalist Movement, 323  
 Nationalization, 380, 384  
 Nayee Taleem, 247  
 Nazis, 53, 170, 213, 237  
 Nebuchadnezzar, 7  
 NEFA, 373  
 Negro, 21, 22  
 Nehru, Jawahar Lal, 4n, 12, 16, 17, 72, 139, 165, 195, 207n, 212n, 372, 376, 380  
 Nehru, Motilal, 12, 201, 289  
 Nehru Report, 204, 284  
 Nero, 170  
 New humanism, 58  
 Newman, Henry, 62  
 New Testament, 30, 62, 151  
 Newton, 23, 46, 299  
 Nietzsche, 6, 23, 104, 276, 282  
 Ninus, 7, 8  
*Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, 30  
 Noel-Baker, Phillip, 408  
 Non-cooperation, 11, 170, 203-205, 375 ;—the policy of non-cooperation—as approved by the Indian National Congress, 204 ;—Gandhi on the place of social boycott in the non-cooperation movement, 204n,—Tagore's view on non-cooperation, 205 ;—Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience and Civil Resistance, 205-207  
 Non-cooperation Movement, 165, 204, 205, 207, 211, 222  
 Non-violence, 26, 50, 151,—and World Politics, 169-172, 374-377-392,—its application in International Relations, 162  
 Novicow, Jacques, 176
- O
- Occasionalism, 315  
 Old Testament, 30  
 Ogburn, 408  
 Ottoman empire, 7, 115
- P
- Paine, 225  
 Pakistani attack on India, 376  
 Panchayat, 246, 380, 384-385  
 Panchayat Raj, 75  
 Panchayat Samiti, 365  
 Panini, 6  
 Panipat, battle of, 396  
 Parliament, British, 237  
 Parsons, T., 365  
 Pareto, V., 234  
 Parmenides, 329  
 Partyless Democracy, 350-355  
 Patel, 12, 164, 388  
 Patanjali, 31, 55, 272, 404  
 Paul, St., 8, 143, 187  
 Peace Brigade, 208  
 Penn, William, 26, 209  
 People's Welfare, 383  
 Persian Civilization, 95  
 Peter, of Russia, 12  
 Phaleas of Chalcedon, 54  
*Phenomenology of Mind* (Hegel's), 269  
 Philip of Macedon, 23  
 Philosophical Anarchism, 348  
 Philosophical Radicals, 44, 88  
 Phoenix Settlement, 40  
 Pigou, 5  
 Pilaser, Tiglath, 7  
 Pisistratus, 7  
*Pitriyana*, 59  
 Planning, 381, 384  
 Plato, 4, 14, 23, 32, 33, 44, 45, 54, 61, 76, 87, 99, 103, 106, 128, 145, 180,

- 242, 250, 218-269, 271, 275, 282-286, 288, 309, 323, 347, 386-91;—his influence on Gandhi, 281;—his spiritual approach to history, 282
- Platonic, 41
- Polak, 8n, 207
- Polemarchus, 282
- Political realism, 372
- Politics, Spiritualization of, 69
- Poona Pact, 111
- Positive Society, (in Comte), 296-297
- Positivism (three types of), 291
- Pragmatism, 400-403
- Prahlad, 35
- Prasad, Dr. Rajendra, 6n, 12, 271, 407
- Prasad, Sri Ram Charitra, 406
- Pranayama*, 93
- Preamble to the Constitution of India, 372
- Prince, 372
- Prithvi Sukta*, 167
- Proletariat, 319
- Proudhon, 319
- Public Administration and Gandhism, 162
- Puranas, 63, 155
- Purusha Sukta*, 66, 67, 155
- Putalibai, Srimati, (Gandhi's mother), 33
- Pyarelal, 388-390
- Pythagoras, 329
- Q**
- Quakers, 194
- Quit India Movement, 12, 222
- R**
- Racialism, 236, 308
- Radhakrishnan, S., 14, 29, 66, 250n, 271, 276-277, 388
- Rahim Khankhana, 122
- Raichand Bhai, 34, 300
- Rai, Lala Lajpat, 196
- Rajniti, 359
- Rajyoga* of Vivekananda, 31
- Rajyoga* of M. N. Dwivedi, 31
- Rama, 22, 32, 166, 209-210, 265, 273;—*Ramayana*, 314
- Ramdhun, 408
- Ramakrishna, Paramhansa, 30, 104, 304, 329
- Ram Mohan Roy, 112
- Ramanuja, 6, 35
- Ram Raj, 110, 123, 147, 231, 234, 266, 267, 275, 313
- Ramatirtha, 6, 29, 311
- Ramayana*, 18, 318
- Ramsay, Macdonald, 72, 200
- Ranade, M.G., 16
- Rani of Jhansi, 371
- Raichand, Bhai, 31, 34n
- Ravana, 8, 71
- Reading, 252
- Relativism, 334
- Renaissance, 57
- Renan, 94
- Rhodes, Cecil, 24
- Ricardo, 330
- Rigveda, 66, 166, 339
- Rolland, Romain, 23, 26, 28n, 31, 94, 110, 276, 387
- Roman Empire, 143
- Romanticism, 94
- Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis, 276
- Romulus, 173
- Roosevelt, 22, 192
- Round Table Conference, (Second), 18, 20, 36, 136, 227, 229
- Rousseau, 6, 12, 17, 49, 61
- Rowlatt Bill, 11, 222
- Roy, M. N., 13n, 199n, 367n, 376
- Royce, 301
- Rural Violence, 396-397 ;—its roots, 397 ;—rural violence in Bihar, 397 ;—Election & rural violence, 398 ;—remedies against, 400-404
- Ruskin, 124-126, 136n, 143, 146, 269, 271, 312, 324, 330, 382
- Russian Civilization, 94, 384  
—on Civil Religion, 74, 103, 156 ;—on General Will 177, 218-332, 239, 250, 268, 288, 309, 339, 385, 387, 394

Russo-Japanese War, 21

S

Sabarmati Ashram, 11

Sacerdotium, 14

Sachchidananda, the highest formation of reality, 32

Sadaquat Ashram, 407

Sadhana, 58, 269, 319

Salt Satyagrah (1930), 22, 47, 165, 323

Salter, 269

Samkara, 3, 6, 14, 37, 114

Samkhya, 51, 87

Sarpanch, 398

*Sarvabhotahita*, (the Concept of), 391

Sarvodaya, 87 ;—its philosophical foundations, 331 ;—and communism and socialism, 334 ;—similarities, 334-336 ;—differences, 337 ;—and village community, 338-341 ;—and its economics, 341-343 ;—its philosophy & sociology, 347 ;—and Sam-pattidan, 342 ;—its political philosophy, 348

Savigny, 5

Savonarola, 7, 173

Satya, 81

Satyagraha, 58, 73, 77, 99, 115, 165-166 ;—the theory & practice of, 188-217 ;—origins of, 188-191 ; Thoreau and Gandhi on Satyagraha, 191-194 ;—its theoretical foundations, 194-200 ;—Satyagraha and Passive Resistance, 194-195 ;—differences between Satyagraha & Passive Resistance of Swadeshi Period, 195-196 ;—Satyagrah in South Africa, 195 ;—Theory of Satyagraha, 196-198 ;—Satyagraha and Ahimsa, 198 ;—Satyagraha and Justice and Truth, 198 ;—and Tapasya or Penance, 199-200 ;—its forms and technics, 200-208 ;—

(a) Fast (views of Muhammad and Gandhi), 200 ;—(b) voluntary migration, 201 ;—(c) Hartal, 201 ;—(d) Peaceful Picketing, 202 ;—(e) Non-cooperation, 203 ;—(f) Civil Disobedience, 206 ;—(g) Civil Resistance, 206 ;—(h) Peace Brigade, 208 ;—Conditions for the success of Satyagraha, 208-212 ;—Gandhi's views on the rules for Satyagrahi, 211-212 ;—Critique of Satyagraha, 212-213 ;—Satyagraha and Democracy, 213-217

Schlegel, 45

Schopenhauer, 6, 51

Schumacher, 364

Schumpeter, 5, 288n, 307n, 368

Schweitzer, 42, 89, 96, 153

Searle, Justice, 221

Second World War, 11

Secularism, 77

Seeley, 268

Self-Government, 259, 365

Self-Immolation, 378-379

Semiramis, 7

Seneca, 76, 99

Shastri, Lal Bahadur, 372, 376

Sheikh Abdullah, 164

Shraddha, 37

Shraddhananda, 6

Shri Harsha (Vedantist thinker), 6, 112

Shuddhi and Tabligh, 64, 119n

Singh, G. N., 366n

Sinn Feinism, 195

Sismondi, 288

Sita, 267

Slade, Miss M., 387

Small, Albion, 299

Smritis, 110, 113

Smuts, General, 56, 200, 221

Social altruism, 68

Social solidarity, 287

Socrates, 3, 28, 29, 224, 386

Solomon, 74, 151

Sombart, 307, 309

Sophists, 179

- Sorel, 5, 202, 396  
 Sorokin, P. A., 174  
 Spencer, Herbert, 176, 268  
 Spengler, Oswald, 6, 89, 94, 104, 309  
 Spinoza, 74  
 St. Paul, 8, 143, 387  
 St. Simon, 289, 293  
 Stalin, 18, 338  
 Stirner, Max, 252, 256, 288, 314  
 Sthitaprajna, 178  
 Stoicism, 304  
 Struve, Peter, 325  
 Sukracharya, 77  
 Sumner, W. G., 237  
 Sun-yat-Sen, 22  
 Suradasa, 48  
 Swadeshi, 82, 195-196  
 Swadharma, 43, 223  
 Swaraj, 12, 24, 65, 77, 112, 115, 117, 147, 168, 222, 236, 275, 292, 349, 368, 374, 376-378, 381-383;—Political, Moral and Social Swaraj, 374  
 Syrian Civilization, 95  
 Systems Analysis, 365
- T
- Tabligh*, 119  
 Tagore, R. N., 6, 57, 138, 205, 273, 329  
 Tarde, 166  
 Tendulkar, 8n, 104, 109, 257n, 264n, 388  
 Teresa, St., 93  
 Thakur, D.N., 6  
*The Indian Home Rule* (by Gandhi), 152  
*The Light of Asia*, (by E. Arnold), 62  
 Theosophists, 34  
 Theseus, 173  
 Thibaut, 291  
 Thomas, Norman, 408  
 Thoreau, 191, 203, 285, 269, 321  
 Thrasymachus, 24, 282  
 Tilak, B. G., 12, 14, 17, 68, 104, 168, 329, 371-373, 375
- Tocqueville, 217  
 Totalitarianism, 77, 243, 329, 372  
 Tolstoy, 6, 10, 10n, 26, 29, 31, 37, 44, 73, 98, 104, 129, 130, 143-144, 151-152, 157, 190, 195, 251, 259, 267-268, 269-271, 300, 309, 311, 312, 314, 323-324, 387, 396 ;—on Hegel, Malthus and Comte, 144  
 Toynbee, 307  
 Trade Guild, 109  
 Treitschke, 24  
 Tripitakas, 113  
 Troeltsch, 97  
 Trusteeship, 128, 390  
 Truth, 32, 33, 36, 37, 41, 42, 45, 48, 55, 58, 77  
 Tucker, 258, 314  
 Tulsidas, 6, 16, 48, 64, 197, 238, 252, 269, 330  
 Turks, 75  
 Turkish Sultan, 115  
 Turgot, 288n
- U
- Ulianov, A., 324  
 Unemployment, 382, 390  
 UNESCO, 386, 387n  
 United Nations, 275, 385, 392, 408  
 U.N. Charter, 275  
*Universitas hominum*, 40  
 Untouchability, 18, 20, 46, 97, 111, 236, 308, 371  
 Upanishadas, 18, 37, 63, 67, 129  
 Utopia, 366, 368
- V
- Vaishanavism, 166  
 Valmiki, 145, 267, 333  
 Vaudois, 173  
 Vanguard (theory of), 128  
 Varma, V.P.,—on Gandhism and Gandhiology, 387 ;—on Rajniti and Lokniti, 319 ;—on Gandhism and Post-War Period, 371-386 ;—on Recent Literature on Gandhiology, 387-395 ;—on Gandhi as an individualist, 84 ;—on H. T. Mazumdar's inter-

- pretation of Gandhi, 260 ;—on Rural Violence, 396-409, 415-416 ;—Director of Election Studies, 365n,—Gandhi Centenary Speeches, 37In  
 Varna, 66, 107, 110, 266  
 Varnashrama, 296  
 Vashistha, 8, 16  
 Vaux, Clotide De, 289  
*Vayam* (the concept of), 339  
 Veda and Gandhi, 63, 64, 65, 67  
 Vedanta, 51, 113, 300, 302, 330  
 Vedantic, 42, 156  
 Vedic Samhitas, 37  
 Vesoges, 7  
 Vibhishana, 8, 209, 210  
 Vidura, 8  
 Vietnam War, 385  
 Village Industries Association, 137  
 Village Republics, 245  
 Virajananda, 329  
 Vivekananda, 6, 31, 41, 55, 69, 82, 94, 104, 273, 311, 329, 333, 347, 371  
 Violence, (in three different contexts) 181  
 Voltaire, 103  
 Voluntarism, 43  
 Volunteer Ambulance Corps, 157  
 Vratas, 52, 59, 83, 223 (Mahavratas, 232)  
 Vyasa, 6, 68, 333, 404  
*Vyavasayatmika Buddhi*, 25
- W
- Wallace, 103  
 Wallace, (British Political Idealist), 225, 269
- War and Peace (of Tolstoy), 151  
 Wardha Scheme of Education, 78  
 Washington, 8  
 Washington Irving, 30, 116  
 Weber, Max, 15, 97, 98, 233  
 Wellington, 198  
 Wells, H. G., 224  
 Western Imperialism, 23  
*What Then Must We Do?* (of Tolstoy), 151, 153  
 White, Leonard D., 217  
 Whitman, 25n  
 Whitehead, A. N., 307  
 Wilson, 8  
 World State, 263  
 World Police Force, 263  
 World Wars, 273  
 Wybergh, W. J. (Gandhi's letter to), 259
- Y
- Yajna, and Gandhian Social Idealism, 146  
 Yajnavalkya, 145  
*Yajurveda*, 67, 80, 339  
 Yoga, 42  
 Yoga, Anasakti, 68  
*Yoga-Sutra* of Patanjali, 31, 82, 404  
 Young Turk Movement in Turkey, 21  
 Yugoslav Communist Party, 366
- Z
- Zend Avesta*, 64  
 Zoroaster, 8, 22, 64, 273  
 Zoroastrianism, 305  
 Zulu rebellion, 9, 53, 157

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